25c
No. 2 APRIL 1956

ORIGINAL EC PICTO-FICTION

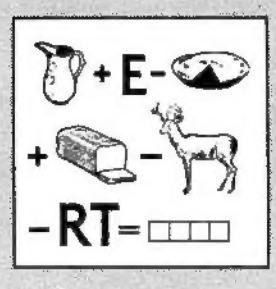
crime

Adult Suspense Stories ILLUSTRATED

Introducing...

PICTO-FICTION

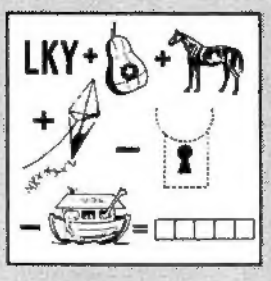
Can You Solve These 3 Puzzles?



No. 1

Solution Is One of Last Names Below:

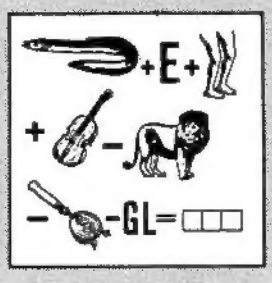
Johann E. BODE
Henry FORD
Alice CARY
Alexander G. BELL
Johann S. BACH
William PACA



No. 2

Solution Is One of Last Names Below:

Robert BURNS
John BROWN
Ethan ALLEN
Alfred E. SMITH
H. G. WELLS
Sigmund FREUD



No. 3

Solution Is One of Last Names Below:

John GAY
Will H. LOW
Walter MAP
Edgar W. NYE
Robert E. LEE
Samuel J. WAY

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$100,000.00 IN CASH PRIZES

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Believing that people like puzzles, and that puzzles in themselves are inherently educational, the sponsors have combined the challenge of puzzles with the opportunity to get rich—with the result being this $100,000.00 Opportunity Puzzle Contest, in which YOU MAY WIN A FORTUNE IN CASH!

AS YOU READ this page, you have before you a truly remarkable opportunity . . . an opportunity to win thousands and thousands of dollars in an exciting, fascinating contest with new and stimulating puzzles.

Today! — right now! — ACT on this opportunity! See the three puzzles printed above. And, following the procedure explained with the Sample Puzzle in the lower part of this page, see if you can find the name each puzzle represents.

When you have done that, fill in your answers to the three puzzles, along with your own name and address, on the coupon in the lower left corner of the page. Mail the coupon promptly — to the address shown — and we will send you, *FREE and entirely without obligation*, full rules, details and the official set of basic puzzles of the Opportunity Puzzle Contest, in which $100,000.00 in Cash Prizes will be awarded.

Yes — any one of 400 cash prizes may become yours in this contest — a 1st Prize of $50,000.00! — a 2nd Prize of $10,000.00! — a 3rd Prize of $7,500.00! — a 4th Prize of $5,000.00! — or any one of the other prizes shown in the official prize list printed at the right.

$50,000.00 1st Prize May Become Yours!

Fun and Fortune Await You in This Fascinating Contest

The Sample Puzzle below will give you an idea of how to solve the interesting name-puzzles featured in this $100,000.00 Opportunity Puzzle Contest. And the puzzles you see above are actually the first three official puzzles of the contest.

First, of course, study the Sample Puzzle, and read carefully the explanation printed along with it. Then try solving Puzzles No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 above, and see if you can find the famous name represented by each puzzle, in the list of names printed under it.

In this way you will get a taste of the enjoyment and challenge presented in the puzzles of this contest. And as to the thrill of winning, can't you yourself imagine what it would be like to win $50,000.00, $10,000.00, $7,500.00 or any other of the cash prizes shown at the right!

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Act today to get in on this great opportunity! *Right now!* — fill in your answers to Puzzles 1, 2 and 3 on the coupon at the lower left. Also fill in plainly your own name and address, and mail the coupon promptly to the address shown. We will then rush you additional puzzles, rules and details explaining just how you go about making yourself eligible to win $50,000.00, $10,000.00, $7,500.00, $5,000.00 or any other of the cash sums to be awarded.

Don't put it off! Act here and now, while this opportunity is before you! Solve the three puzzles above, and mail the coupon TODAY!

Someone Must Win! Why Not You!

400 CASH PRIZES

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7th PRIZE	$1,500.00
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11th thru 15th, ea.	$200.00 . . . $1,000.00
16th thru 30th, ea.	$100.00 . . . $1,500.00
31st thru 100th, ea.	$75.00 . . . $5,250.00
101st thru 150th, ea.	$50.00 . . . $2,500.00
250 Additional, ea.	$35.00 . . . $8,750.00
TOTAL	$100,000.00

OPPORTUNITY PUZZLE CONTEST Dept. EC
31 West 47 St., New York 36, N. Y.

Listed in box at right are my answers to Puzzles 1, 2, and 3. I am interested in your $100,000.00 Cash Prize Contest and would like you to send me—without charge or obligation—the set of basic puzzles together with full rules and details as to how I may win $50,000.00 First Prize or any other of the 400 prizes.

PUZZLE NO. 1	
PUZZLE NO. 2	
PUZZLE NO. 3	

Name _____

Address _____

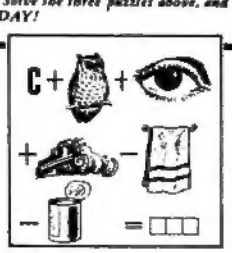
City & State _____

This SAMPLE PUZZLE Will Give You the Idea!

Before trying to solve Puzzles 1, 2 and 3 above, let's solve this Sample Puzzle:

Note the various letters and objects, and the plus and minus signs. C plus OWL plus EYE plus TANK . . . gives us COWLEYETANK. Next, minus TOWEL minus CAN means that from COWLEYETANK we take away the letters TOWELCAN, leaving YEK.

Now, in the list of names under the puzzle, we see the last name of Francis Scott KEY, and by re-arranging the letters Y E K to K E Y, we have KEY as the correct solution to this puzzle.



SOLUTION IS ONE OF LAST NAMES BELOW:

Edward W. BOK
Robert E. LEE
Peter PAN
Francis Scott KEY
Edgar Allan POE
Franz ART

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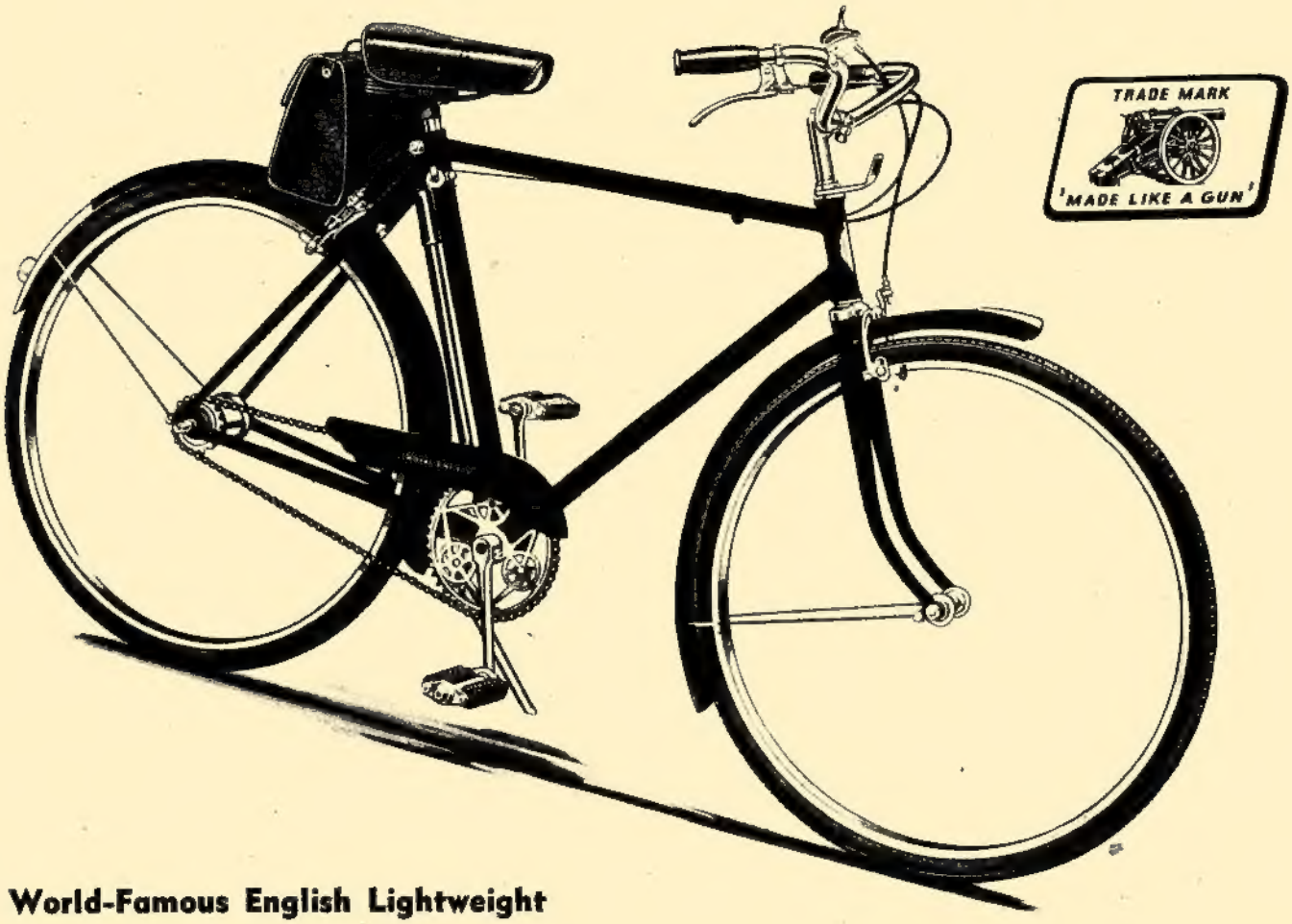

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AN ENTERTAINING EC CREATION

crime ILLUSTRATED

No. 2 APRIL 1956

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Illustrated by Johnny Craig

This is the second issue of "CRIME Illustrated", one of a series of four new magazines to be presented in the novel and revolutionary form of adult entertainment which we at E.C. call "Picto-Fiction". The others are: "Adult Tales of TERROR Illustrated", "CONFESSIONS Illustrated" and "SHOCK Illustrated".

At this writing, letters on CRIME's first issue are just beginning to come in. Here are some excerpts:

. . . Your "Picto-Fiction" layout certainly puts the story across. If the next issues are as good as the first, it looks like CRIME Illustrated *is headed for success.—Leslie J. Faircloth, Norfolk, Virginia.*

. . . You have finally hit the happy medium, a way of presenting mature entertainment in a mature form. "Picto-Fiction" is the greatest development yet in the annals of fine E.C. literature.—Vic Schwartz, N. Y. C.

We plan a Readers' Letter Page in the next issue of CRIME Illustrated. We welcome your letters. Write to:

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MOTIVE

Arnold's voice was barely audible in the stillness. The shadows cast by the bars of his cell etched undulating lines across his thin, pale, nondescript face. But it was not awe of his surroundings which made him speak so softly. A man under sentence of death gives little thought to such trivia. Arnold was remembering.

"I deserve to die, Father," Arnold said. He shook his head wonderingly. "I killed Harriet! In cold blood! Why, I . . . I used to get sick if I even so much as crushed a mosquito. And yet, I killed her! I murdered my wife!"

For a moment, Arnold seemed to have forgotten the priest who sat so unobtrusively in a far corner of the cell, listening. Arnold was marvelling at the horror, the magnitude of the act which had brought him to this place.

And the priest, staring at him, marvelled a little too. The condemned man was so . . . so . . . ordinary, that was the word. A small, mild man with nervous hands and pale, watery, eggshell-blue eyes.

But there was little time left. They would be coming for Arnold soon.

"Go on, my son," the priest said.

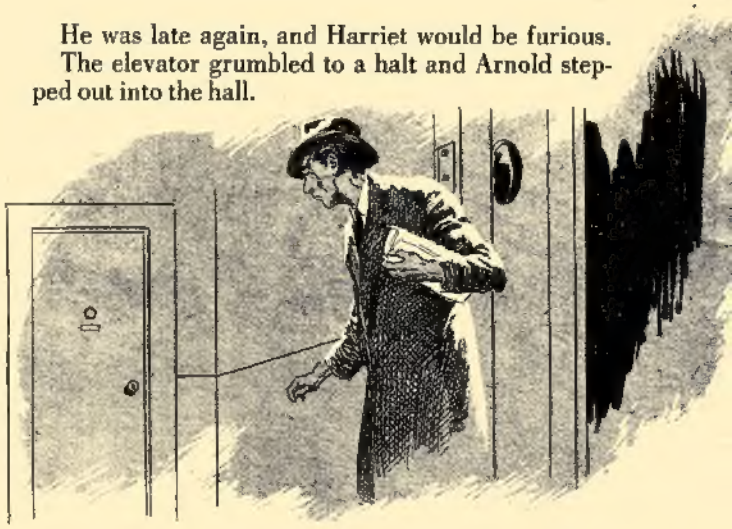
"Yes . . . yes." Arnold shivered a little. "Father, I never told them. I never told them *why* I killed Harriet. But I have to tell someone. If someone knows, and understands, it won't be so bad...dying."

The priest stirred, closed his eyes, and put his fingers to his forehead in an attitude of deep concentration. It helped a man to speak freely, sometimes, if the confessor did not look at him.

It helped Arnold. He paced the short length of the cell once, twice. Then, he stretched out on the steel bunk, his hands behind his head, his watery blue eyes fixed vacantly on the concrete ceiling above. He began to speak . . .

He was late again, and Harriet would be furious.

The elevator grumbled to a halt and Arnold stepped out into the hall.



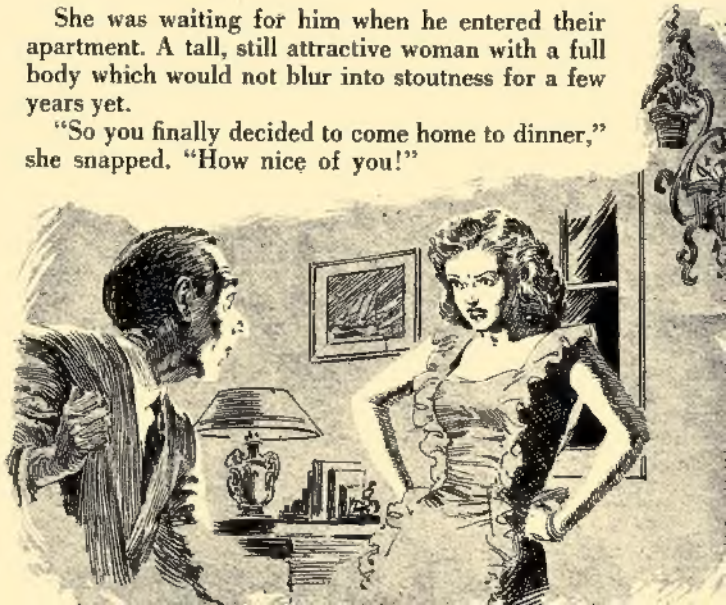
He'd lost all track of time in the auction shop. He'd sat, enthralled, as a hundred treasures were brought to the block and sold. Such pretty things. Such interesting things.

Arnold loved pretty things. Things which carried an aura of mystery, of enchantment about them. He had a dozen such things, neatly stacked in his closet. Cheap Chinese magic boxes, nesting one within the other. "Lucky" amulets. Charms. They were his passage to a lovely mental never-never-land where he could forget his drab existence . . . and Harriet.

Lord knew his life was drab. Like this down-at-the-heels, quasi-respectable building in which he lived; not quite a tenement and yet not plush enough, not well kept enough to total what Harriet called a "decent place to live." She hated it. But then, Harriet hated being his wife. Sometimes, Arnold even thought she hated him.

She was waiting for him when he entered their apartment. A tall, still attractive woman with a full body which would not blur into stoutness for a few years yet.

"So you finally decided to come home to dinner," she snapped. "How nice of you!"

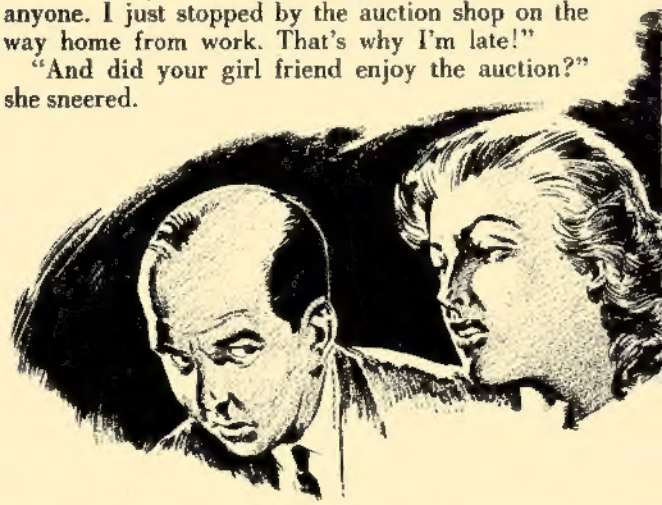


Her face was tight and Arnold thought, *"Oh, no! Not hysterics! Not again!"*

"Did you have a good time?" Harriet asked with calm, furious politeness. "The *two* of you?"

"Harriet, please," Arnold sighed. "I wasn't with anyone. I just stopped by the auction shop on the way home from work. That's why I'm late!"

"And did your girl friend enjoy the auction?" she sneered.



Harriet was still calm. Still furiously polite. But in a moment, the deluge would come. Somewhere, she'd picked up the insane idea that he was seeing another woman. And it had become the focal point of her dissatisfaction, of her helpless rage at the trap of mediocrity in which life had enmeshed her.

Arnold shrugged. From his pocket, he took a small package. Inside, there was a small wooden figure of a big-bellied man. A joss, the auctioneer had called it. Guaranteed to bring laughter and happiness into the life of its owner.

"I was alone," Arnold said. "I bought this!"

Her hand slapped the package out of his fingers.

"Harriet," he whispered. "Please. Not again. No more of your accusations. I was alone. Believe me . . ."

"Liar!" she screamed. "You think I don't know that you only buy these things as an excuse, don't you? You think I don't know that they're just a cover up! But I do! I know what goes on! I'm not blind!"

The storm broke over him, drowned him, buried him. She raved and ranted.

"Day after day! Cooped up in this . . . this dive! Cleaning! Cooking! Working! That's all I do!"

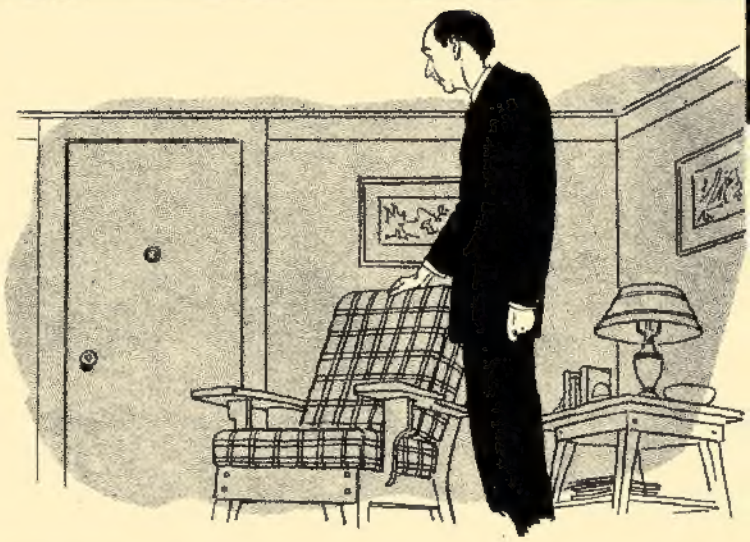
"And where are you? Out with some woman! Spending money on her! But can I ever have a few dollars extra? No!" Her face was livid. "No!"

God, she was so ugly when she was like this!

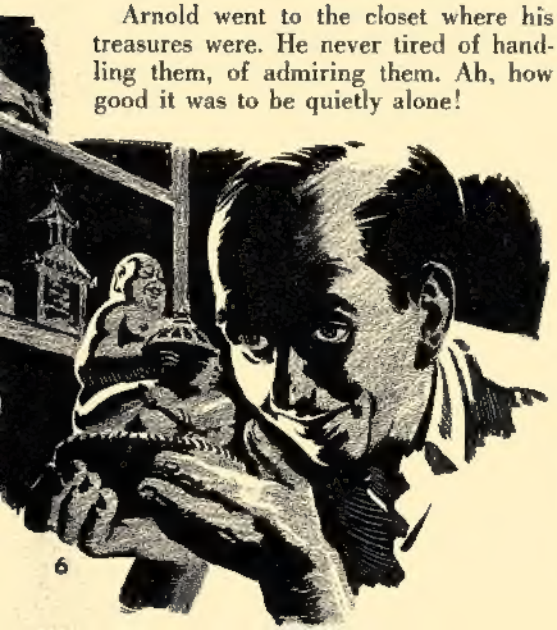
There'd been a time when Arnold had tried to reason with Harriet, but she'd long since beaten all resistance out of him with her vicious tongue. Thank Heaven this was Wednesday night. On Wednesday nights she played cards with her girl friends. In an hour or so, she'd go out and he'd be alone. Blessedly, quietly alone.

But first, there was that hour. Harriet's shrew's tongue lashed at him until he wanted to scream. She raved about the other woman, about his unfaithfulness. Over and over again. As if any woman would want anything to do with *him!*

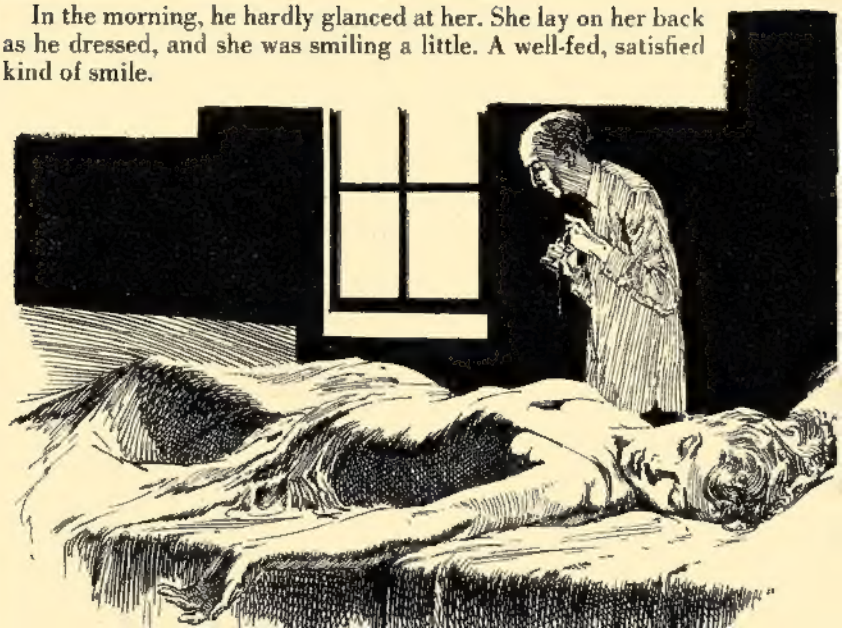
The door, slamming angrily behind her when she finally left, was the punctuation mark which ended her tirade and began his respite. Harriet would be asleep when he left for work in the morning. He wouldn't have to speak to her again for a whole twenty-four hours.



Arnold went to the closet where his treasures were. He never tired of handling them, of admiring them. Ah, how good it was to be quietly alone!



In the morning, he hardly glanced at her. She lay on her back as he dressed, and she was smiling a little. A well-fed, satisfied kind of smile.



Harriet always looked like that after one of her Wednesday night card parties. It was as if she, too, was cheered and renewed by being away from him a while.

That day, Arnold thought a lot about Harriet. It wasn't her fault, really. The viciousness, the frustration hadn't been there at first. He could even remember a time when she'd been sweet and gentle, warm and exciting . . .

Someone touched his shoulder.

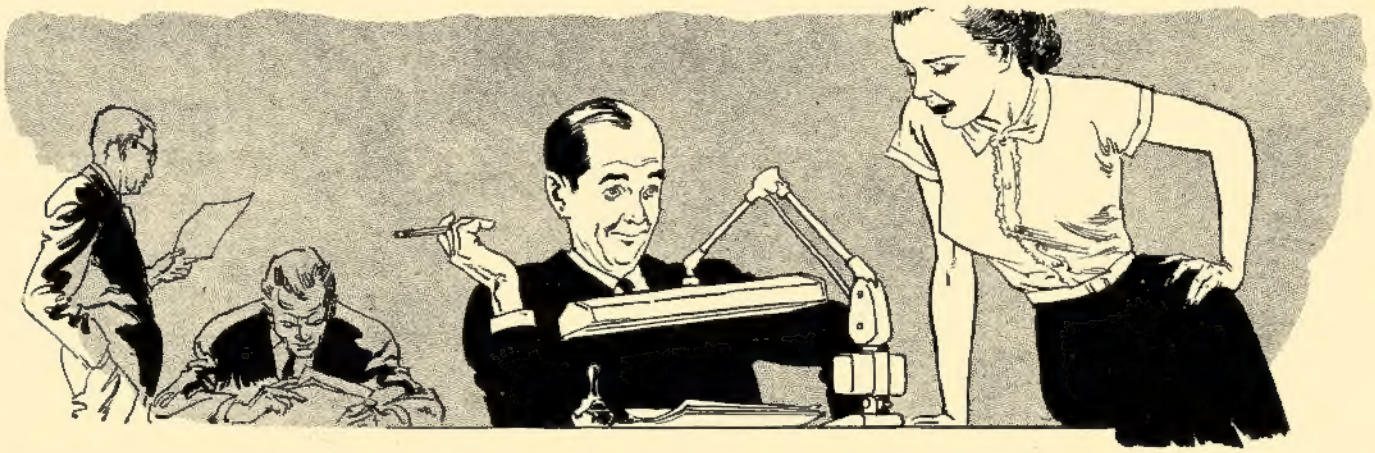
He was seated at his desk . . . one of a dozen set in a straight line across the floor of the office where he was a clerk . . . and he'd almost forgotten his surroundings, when the gentle nudge shocked him back to reality. He looked up at the lovely face smiling down at him.

"Oh, it's you, Ruth," he said.

"In the flesh, Arnie. Doing anything tonight?"

It had to be a joke, of course! A girl like Ruth wouldn't bother with anyone like him!

"The boss told me to ask you if you wouldn't mind working late tonight," she went on. "I have to get some papers typed up on the Logan account and I'll need a lot of figures . . ."



It was so typical. Any of the clerks in the office could have supplied those figures. But the others might have grumbled or demanded extra time off. But Arnold . . .

"Sure, Ruth," he smiled. "I'd be glad to."

"Good. We'll have a sandwich or something at six and then come back here to the office."

Ruth strolled away. Arnold reached for the phone.

This time, at least, Harriet would know where he was. She would be able to call the office and check up on him if she wanted to. This time, she would have no reason for her screaming and her suspicions.

At six, Arnold and Ruth left the office. They went to the little cafeteria on the corner.

They sat at a table in the rear, and Arnold found himself laughing and joking with Ruth.

It was good to be with someone who was still young, still happy, who wasn't embittered and scarred by a life with which she was not content.

That was how Harriet found them. With their heads close together, laughing at some innocuous joke.

She stood before them, pale and righteous, and Arnold saw the familiar tightness in her face.

"Don't," he whispered. "Harriet, please don't . . ."

"So this is how you work late at the office," she smirked. "I knew it. I knew that if I came to the office and watched, I'd get the truth at last. I knew that if I followed you, you'd lead me to your cheap little woman."

It was like something out of a bad play. The banal words, the cliches that dropped from Harriet's lips sounded unreal. But this was really happening.

Others in the cafeteria turned to stare. And Harriet knew. The audience suited her. With an audience, she could humiliate Arnold as even she had never been able to humiliate him before.

But Arnold wasn't looking at Harriet. He was looking at Ruth. Ruth, in the agony of shame and embarrassment, squirming, trying futilely to keep her face calm, and succeeding only in twisting her lips into a forced wooden smile.

"Harriet," Arnold was saying. "I'm begging you. Don't say any more. It isn't like you think. Ruth and I work together. We have to get some papers out tonight. We just came down for a sandwich."

Arnold tried. Harriet enjoyed that. She heard him out. But it was as if she were an executioner, listening to the mumblings of a poor wretch on a rack, knowing that in a moment, she would take another turn of the screw that wrenched the victim's bones in their sockets.

"Have you quite finished?" Harriet asked finally. "Because if you have, I've got a few things to say to you. To you and this . . . this . . ."

The word she used was ugly. It lashed at Ruth like a whip.

"Come on, Ruth." Arnold took the girl's arm.

He walked with her toward the door, feeling her trembling, knowing that she was sick with shame under the knowing smirks of the other diners. But Harriet came after them, shrieking her filth. At the door, Ruth's forced calm gave way suddenly. She burst into tortured sobs and ran.

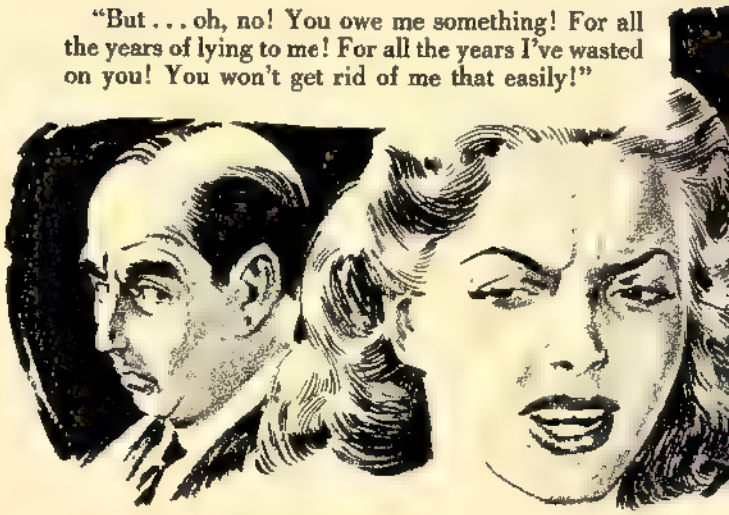
Arnold went home. Harriet was already there when he arrived. But he did not go into the bedroom. From then on, he slept on the sofa in the living room. He tried to withdraw from Harriet, to stay away from her. But they still shared the same roof. And Harriet had what she wanted, now. What she looked upon as evidence of Arnold's infidelity.

The weeks after that were a Hell. Almost a parallel to Creation, Arnold thought. For six days out of every week, she spat her venom at him, lingering lovingly over every untrue accusation, damning him with her tongue. And on the seventh day, on Wednesday, when she played cards, Arnold rested.

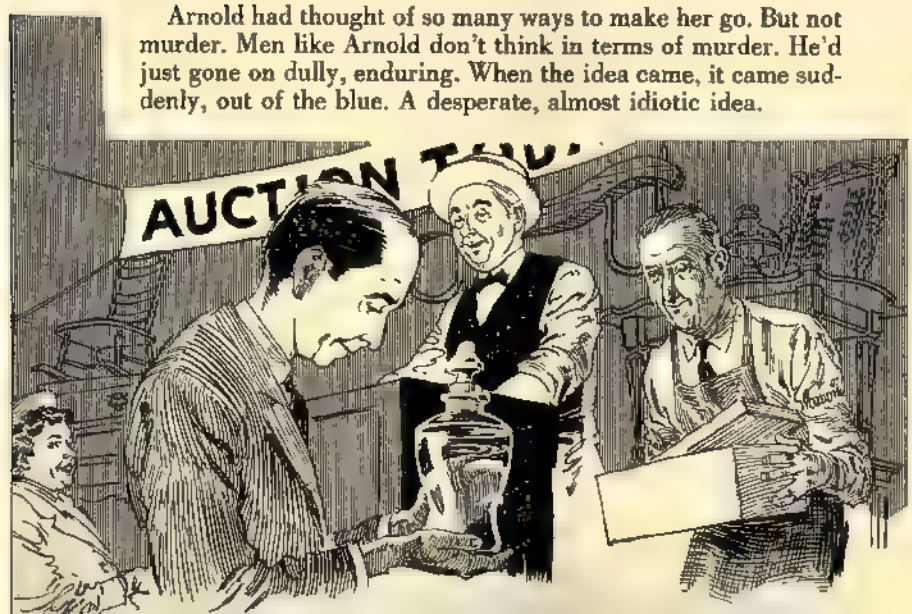
Arnold asked her, once, why she didn't leave, and her snarling words pelted him like acid rain.

"Leave? You'd like that, wouldn't you? You'd like me to get out of your life! So you could run to her! So you could have your other woman!"

"But . . . oh, no! You owe me something! For all the years of lying to me! For all the years I've wasted on you! You won't get rid of me that easily!"



Arnold had thought of so many ways to make her go. But not murder. Men like Arnold don't think in terms of murder. He'd just gone on dully, enduring. When the idea came, it came suddenly, out of the blue. A desperate, almost idiotic idea.



It happened at the auction shop. He'd been walking home from work, and there was the shop, beckoning. And at home was Harriet, waiting with a tasteless dinner and a generous portion of vituperation. He'd made his choice. He'd gone inside.

The auctioneer had been offering the vase for sale when Arnold had entered. He'd held it up. A large, clear glass jar, oddly shaped and filled with a colorless liquid locked inside by a glass stopper. Even the auctioneer had smiled when he'd explained the use of the jar. But Arnold had not smiled.

He'd listened intently and the idea had come and he'd bought the jar.

He'd been the only bidder.

He had it under his arm when he came home, and this time, he made no excuses for being late. He unwrapped the jar and set it on a table.

"What's *that?*" For once, Harriet was too interested to snarl. The vase *was* odd. Arnold had counted on that.

"It's for you," he said. "It's magic!"

"Magic!" Her face was tightening. "More of your stupidity . . ."

Arnold cut her off. "No! I wanted to prove something to you! You're always accusing me of . . . things! All right! This vase is magic! It has a spell on it. That liquid inside . . . looks just like water doesn't it? Well, it isn't! This vase was made long ago, for a woman who suspected her husband of being unfaithful. She wanted to be sure. She had it made by an alchemist. When a husband or a wife owning this vase is unfaithful, the liquid inside turns *black!*"

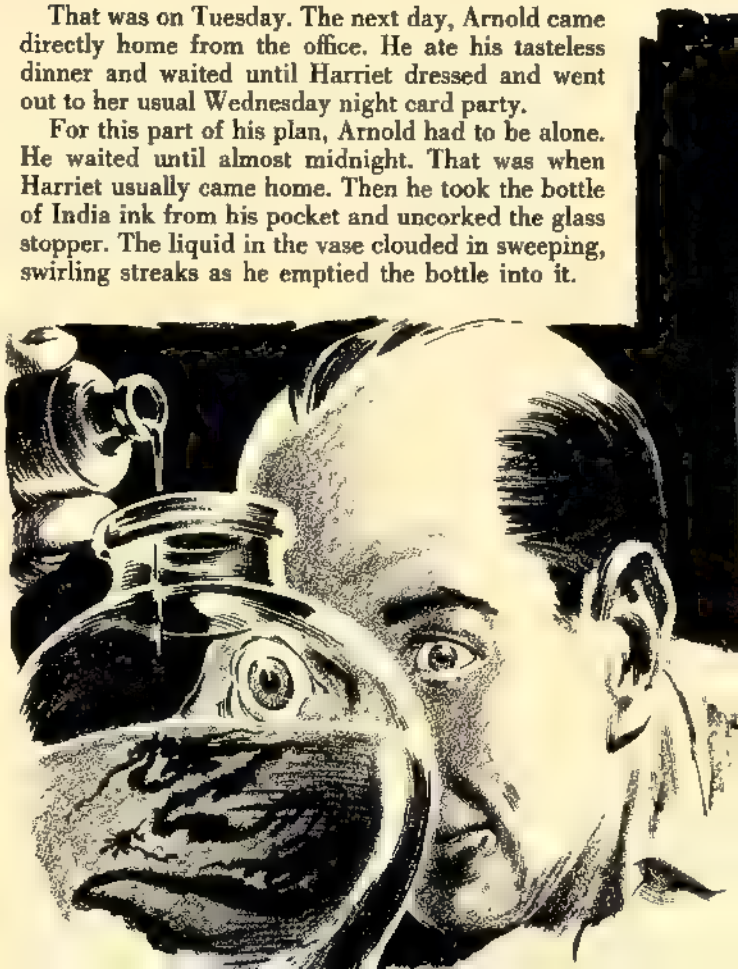
He grinned at her. "Now you'll know for sure! Now you'll know if I really do . . . what you say I do!"

Her eyes blazed. Her face turned livid. "And you paid good money for that?" she shrieked. "You fool!"

This time Harriet's rage was so intense, she almost danced with it. Her body arched as she screamed at him. But Arnold said nothing. He closed his ears to her raving and placed the "magic" jar on the mantel.

That was on Tuesday. The next day, Arnold came directly home from the office. He ate his tasteless dinner and waited until Harriet dressed and went out to her usual Wednesday night card party.

For this part of his plan, Arnold had to be alone. He waited until almost midnight. That was when Harriet usually came home. Then he took the bottle of India ink from his pocket and uncorked the glass stopper. The liquid in the vase clouded in sweeping, swirling streaks as he emptied the bottle into it.



The liquid in the vase turned dead black.

Now! Now, Harriet would leave him! Before, she'd only suspected. Even finding him with Ruth hadn't been proof. Now, she would know! She would see the black liquid and she would know that he'd been unfaithful. She would have to believe the evidence of her own eyes.

Contented, Arnold went to sleep on his lonely couch. He was snoring when Harriet came in. He'd left a lamp burning so that the ebony liquid in the vase would be clearly visible.

But if Arnold expected Harriet to waken him, he was disappointed. He slept through the night, undisturbed.

It was daylight when he opened his eyes. For a long time, he stared at the vase on the mantel.

Then, quite deliberately, he put on his frayed robe and slippers and went into the kitchen.

When he entered the bedroom, he was carrying a long, softly gleaming bread knife.

Harriet was smiling her sated smile. She slept soundly, her head thrown back so that her throat was drawn taut.

Arnold's rage was black. Black like the ink he'd poured into the jar the night before.

He cut her throat with the breadknife. Coldly. Deliberately.

When he picked up the telephone to call the police, Harriet was smiling at him with two mouths, both red and open.

Arnold sat up on the steel cot in his damp prison cell. He looked at the priest.

"I didn't tell them why I did it, Father," he said. "But you can understand. All those years. Accusing me. What else could I do?"

"Thou shalt not kill, my son," the priest whispered.

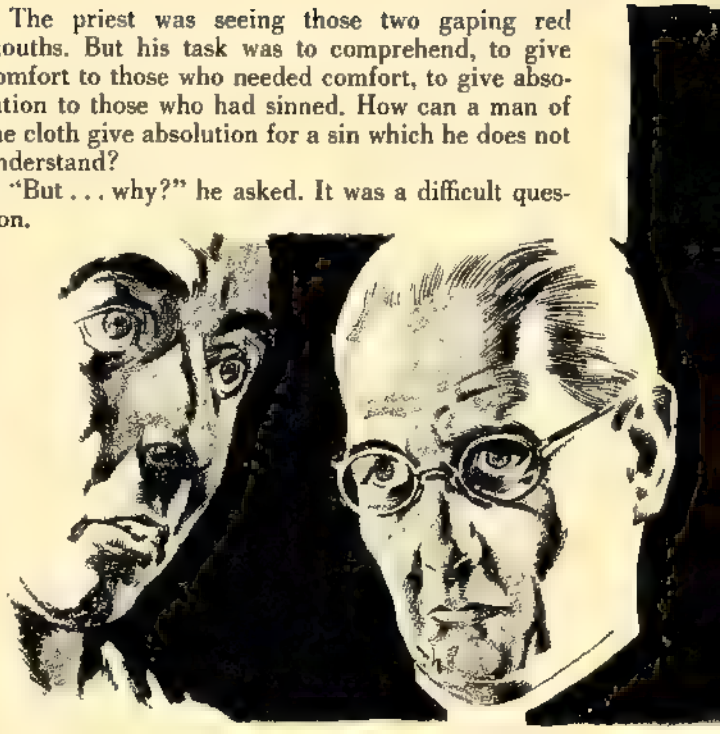
"Was it because you had endured so much, and because your plan had failed? Was it because your wife did not leave you when she saw that the liquid in the vase had turned black? Is that why you did it, my son?" The priest studied him.

"But you had endured so much," he went on after a moment of silence. "Surely you could have kept on enduring!"

Arnold shook his head.

The priest was seeing those two gaping red mouths. But his task was to comprehend, to give comfort to those who needed comfort, to give absolution to those who had sinned. How can a man of the cloth give absolution for a sin which he does not understand?

"But . . . why?" he asked. It was a difficult question.



"It wasn't that, Father," he said. "That vase! I told Harriet that if ever the husband or wife who owned it was unfaithful, the liquid in it would turn black!"

Arnold took a deep breath.

"The husband *or* the wife, Father. I poured ink into the vase to make Harriet think I'd been unfaithful. But in the morning, the liquid *wasn't* black! Because, while I slept, Harriet had emptied the vase, washed it, and refilled it with clear water!"

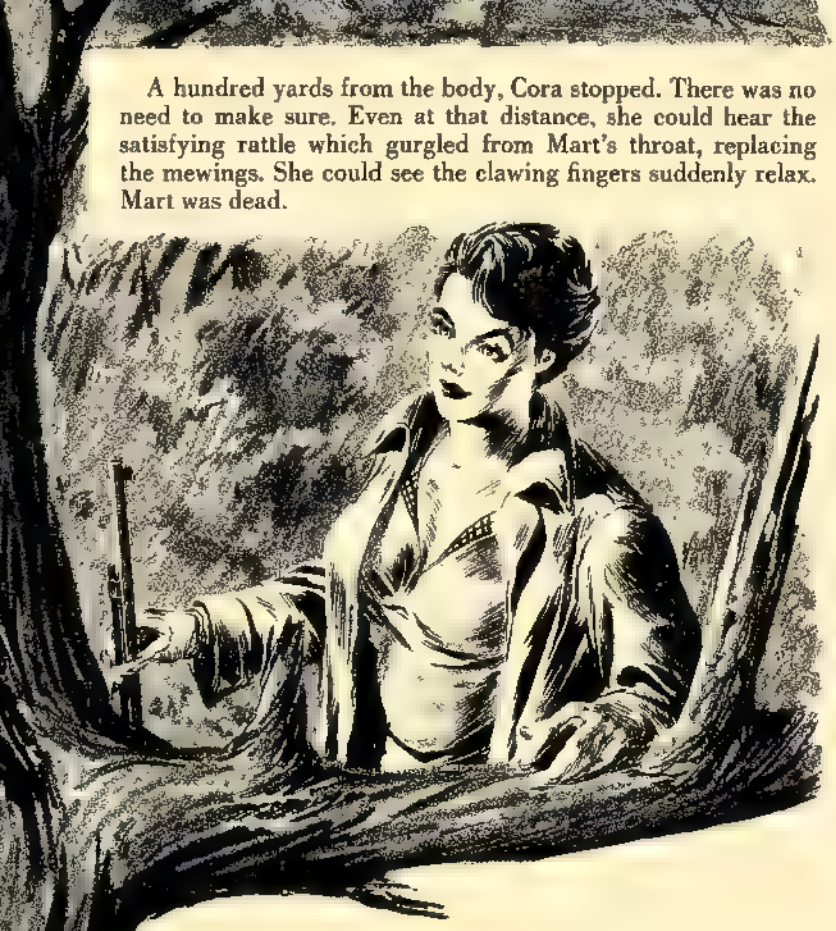
THE END

FAIR TRADE

Cora felt no remorse when she pulled the trigger. Not then, nor afterwards. The heavy slug caught Mart just as he stepped into the clearing. He spun once, his brightly colored mackinaw making a whirling blob of red against the green background, then fell. The mewing sounds of agony which whistled from his constricted throat, his clawing fingers tearing at the soft earth meant nothing to Cora. When she stepped out of her hiding place at the far side of the clearing, the rifle in her hands still smoking, she moved calmly and deliberately. She squinted into the twilight. She had to make sure.

GRAHAM INGELS

A hundred yards from the body, Cora stopped. There was no need to make sure. Even at that distance, she could hear the satisfying rattle which gurgled from Mart's throat, replacing the mewings. She could see the clawing fingers suddenly relax. Mart was dead.



The hard set of Cora's lips softened. Lee would have his chance now. Mart's insurance, payable to his widow, would see to that. And Cora was Mart's widow.

She did not look again at Mart's body lying face down across the clearing. She turned away instead and started back to the cabin.

A coroner's jury would find his death to have been caused by an unfortunate hunting accident and that would end it. Mart was not important. Mart had never been important. The buck deer that the cougar pulls down to feed its young is not important to the cougar except as something to fill its cubs' ravenous bellies, to assuage their needs.

Not that Cora was a mother. She had made sure of that. But the maternal instinct was in her. A powerful, driving instinct. Only in Cora, the instinct had been warped, twisted . . .

Cora smiled. Lee would be happy now. The baby brother whom Cora had loved and cared for all her life would have his chance to be somebody, to amount to something. Lee had been so unhappy these past months. Ever since he'd come to stay with her and Mart . . .

Lee stood in the doorway, a battered valise beside him, and held out his arms. He was thinner, seedy looking. Cora saw that at once. But it was still Lee. When she went to him, when she held him close, it was as if the years had suddenly telescoped, as if she were back with him in the dingy slum tenement they'd once called home.

"Hello, Cora," he'd said. And he'd kissed her lightly, almost casually.

But then, Lee had never been one to show his affection. It was only normal that his eyes should stray to Mart, still seated at the dinner table with Buck, his dog, at his feet.

"So you're Cora's husband!" Somehow, Lee's voice was an insult. "The boss of the beanery where Cora used to work told me she married some guy who lived in a cabin up in the woods. But I really didn't believe it, until now."

"It's true, all right!" Mart grinned and held out a big, calloused hand. Mart had missed the insult completely. There was nothing subtle, nothing clever about Mart. "You must be Lee! Cora's sure told me a lot about you," he said.

Lee took Mart's hand. But he wasn't looking at Mart. His glance was taking in the home-made furniture, the rifles in the rack by the door, the animal skins on the bare walls.

Cora clung to her brother's arm.

"Lee, where have you been? What have you been doing?" she asked. "It's been so long. You never wrote to me!"

"I had a little trouble after I left home." Lee smiled inwardly. Trouble? Yeah. Living by your wits, dodging the police is plenty trouble! But that was water under the bridge. "Matter of fact," he went on, "I'm dead broke, Sis. It took my last few bucks to trace you and get up here. So . . ."

"So you'll stay right here with us, Lee! For as long as you want to! And welcome!"

Mart's huge paw slammed down on Lee's back.

"Thanks," Lee smiled.

This big clown is quite a character, he thought to himself, *but . . . any port in a storm . . .*

Lee's smile vanished a few moments later when he drew Cora into the bedroom.

"You . . . married to a hick like that? Cora, what made you do it? Why? You're like me! Sharp! What ever made you tie up with him? What's he got?" Lee studied his older sister.

"This cabin, some land, and a little money in the bank." Cora shrugged. "That's all, Lee. You disappeared and I got tired of being a waitress. When he asked me to marry him . . . I thought, 'Well, why not?' But forget Mart!"

She slipped her arms around his neck. "Tell me about you, Lee," she whispered. "I've worried so about you!"

"Yeah! I'll bet!" He grimaced down at her. "So much, that as soon as I took off, you married that hayseed! You might at least have stuck around till I got back!" The words spat out like venom. "Are you in love with this guy?"

"What do you think, Lee?" Cora smiled into her brother's eyes, and suddenly he was smiling too.

"So that's it, eh?" he said. "Same old Cora. Take what you can get when you can get it. I said you were like me. Maybe this won't be such a bad set-up at that!"

Outside, the trees rustled softly. Lee went to the window. "I sure never figured I'd be looking for an angle up here! But then, I should have known *you* better! Well," he grinned, "we'll come up with something!" And Lee's eyes flashed at the thought.

Only coming up with something was easier said than done. Mart had so little. The cabin, a few acres af land, and the occasional fees he earned by guiding hunting parties.

Cora found Lee, a few weeks after his arrival, sitting outside the cabin, aimlessly slashing chips out of the bench Mart had so painstakingly built. The hunting knife he was using was Mart's. Cora recognized it.

Lee held up the knife. "Fat pickings, eh, Cora? How do you like my new knife. I traded Mart my busted cigarette lighter for it. The chump!"

"Lee, what's wrong?" Cora touched his hand gently. His unhappiness was her unhappiness. It always had been like that. But he shook her off.

"What *isn't* wrong? *Me!* Stuck in a place like *this!* A couple of months of this and I'll go crazy!" He looked at her desperately. "Cora, I need money!"

"If I just had a few thousand," he whined. "There's a place I know in New York. A business I could buy into! I could make piles! You said Mart had some money . . ."

"Not enough, Lee." Cora shook her head.

Poor Lee. It had always been the same. Lee had always come to her with his problems. And she'd always helped him. But this time there was no way to help. When Lee walked away from her, head down, her heart ached for him. Mart's few dollars would hardly solve Lee's problem. Still . . .

It wasn't difficult getting the money from Mart. He loved her, in his plodding, slow way. Some of it, she got out of him with smiles and kisses and lies about needing a new dress, or a lamp out of the big catalogue from which she shopped.

The rest, Lee managed to get by himself. He began to play cards with Mart . . .

It amused Lee to fool Mart with little tricks of cheating that anyone but Mart would have caught at once. Just as it amused him to swap with Mart. In a month's time, he owned one of Mart's hunting rifles, a new pair of Mart's hunting boots, Mart's best fishing rod . . . and in return, Mart owned a collection of castoffs which Lee's eloquence had endowed with mythical value.

Cora and Lee used to laugh about it together, sometimes. Mart was so big . . . and so dumb! So easy!

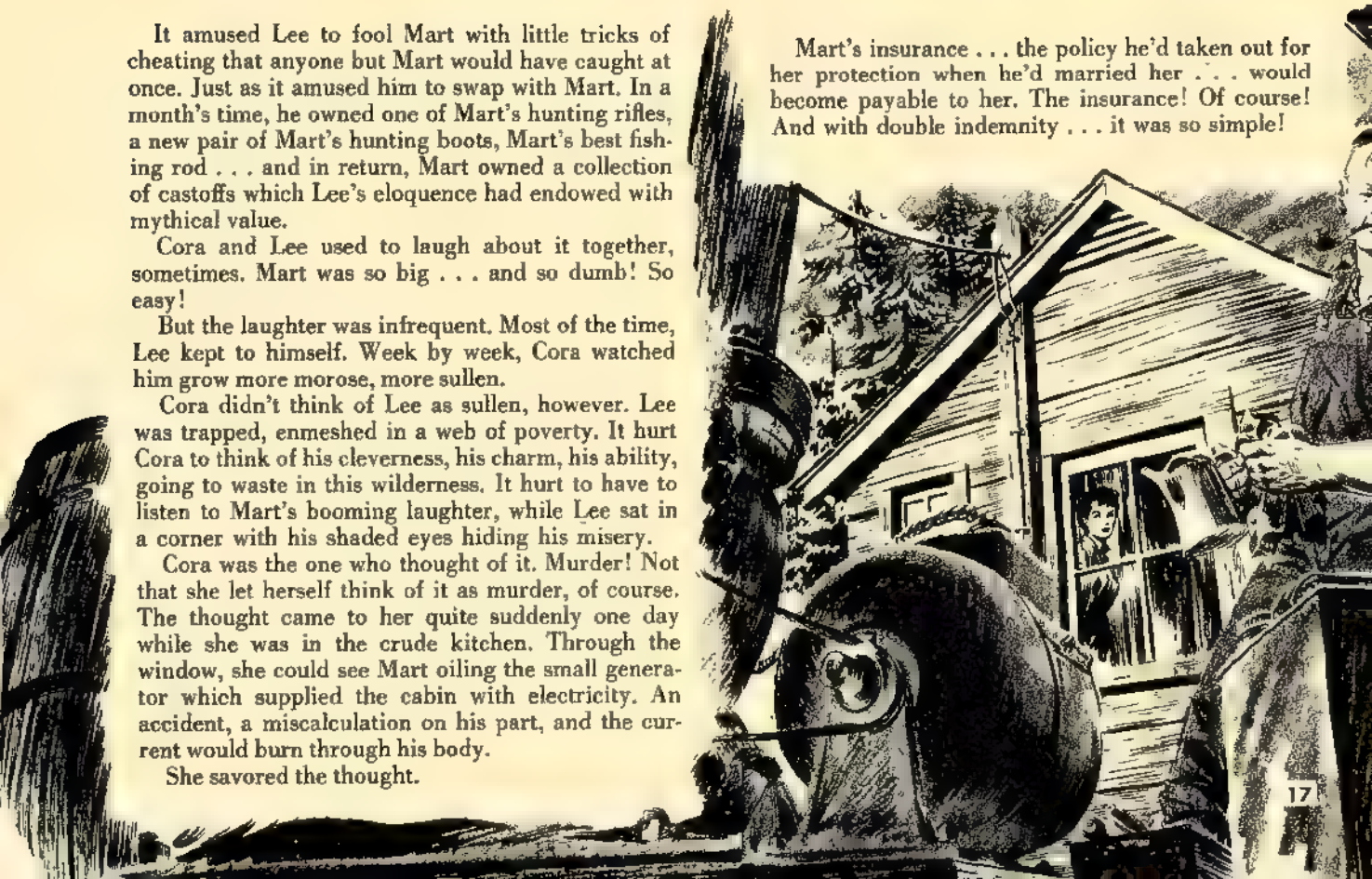
But the laughter was infrequent. Most of the time, Lee kept to himself. Week by week, Cora watched him grow more morose, more sullen.

Cora didn't think of Lee as sullen, however. Lee was trapped, enmeshed in a web of poverty. It hurt Cora to think of his cleverness, his charm, his ability, going to waste in this wilderness. It hurt to have to listen to Mart's booming laughter, while Lee sat in a corner with his shaded eyes hiding his misery.

Cora was the one who thought of it. Murder! Not that she let herself think of it as murder, of course. The thought came to her quite suddenly one day while she was in the crude kitchen. Through the window, she could see Mart oiling the small generator which supplied the cabin with electricity. An accident, a miscalculation on his part, and the current would burn through his body.

She savored the thought.

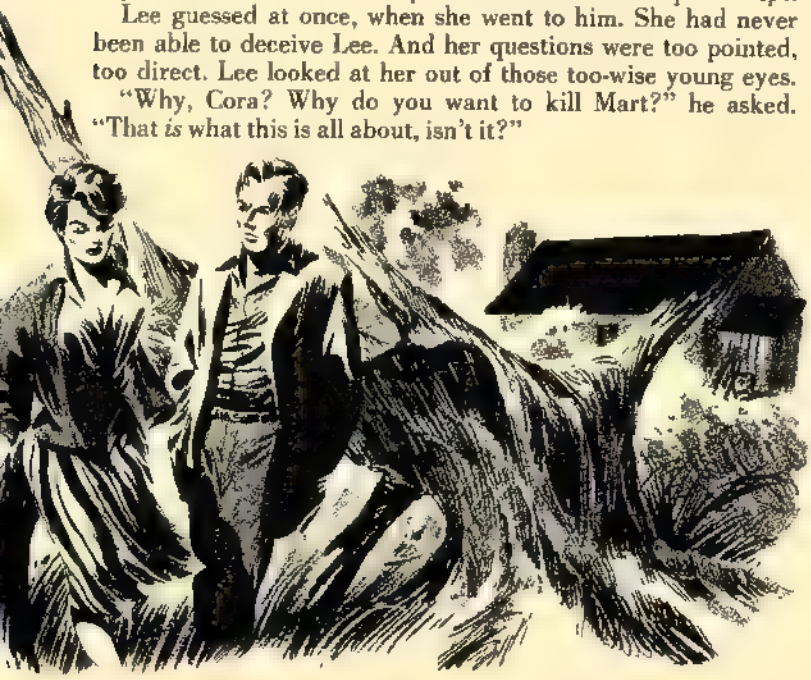
Mart's insurance . . . the policy he'd taken out for her protection when he'd married her . . . would become payable to her. The insurance! Of course! And with double indemnity . . . it was so simple!



Only the method was a problem. It had to look like an accident. But the means were right there. The generator. Electricity. Only one thing was lacking. The know-how. And, as a boy, Lee had been able to replace worn wires and repair lamps.

Lee guessed at once, when she went to him. She had never been able to deceive Lee. And her questions were too pointed, too direct. Lee looked at her out of those too-wise young eyes.

"Why, Cora? Why do you want to kill Mart?" he asked. "That *is* what this is all about, isn't it?"



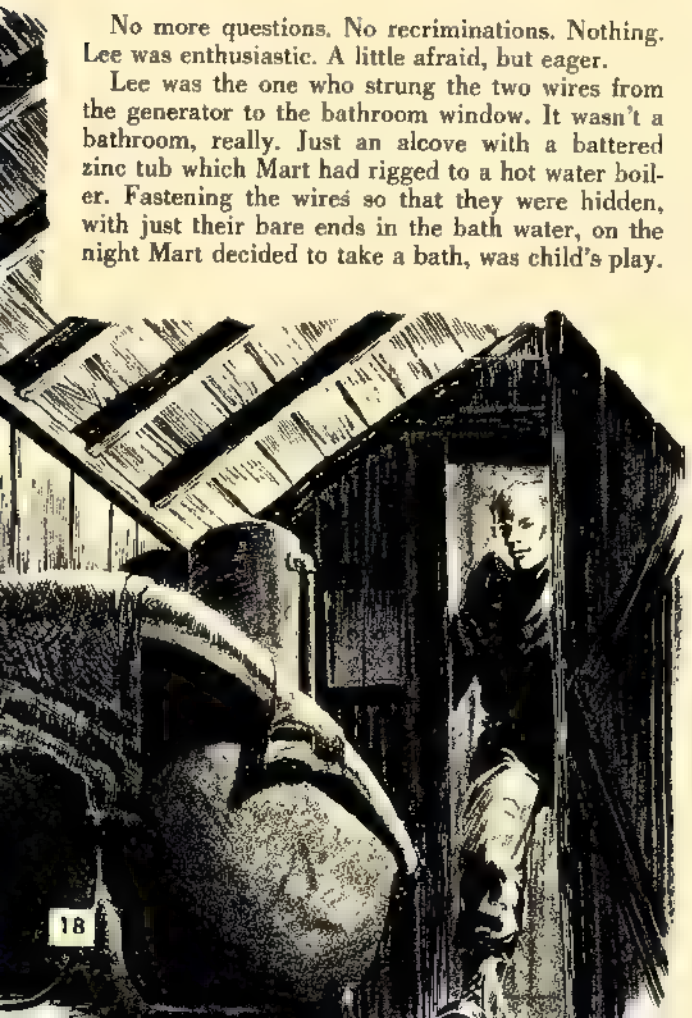
Cora didn't attempt to lie. She knew Lee too well. There was no need.

She nodded. "There's insurance, Lee. Five thousand dollars worth . . . with double indemnity . . ."

Lee's eyes blazed. "Five grand! So that's it! Sis . . . you came to the right place!" He kissed her. "You just leave everything to me!"

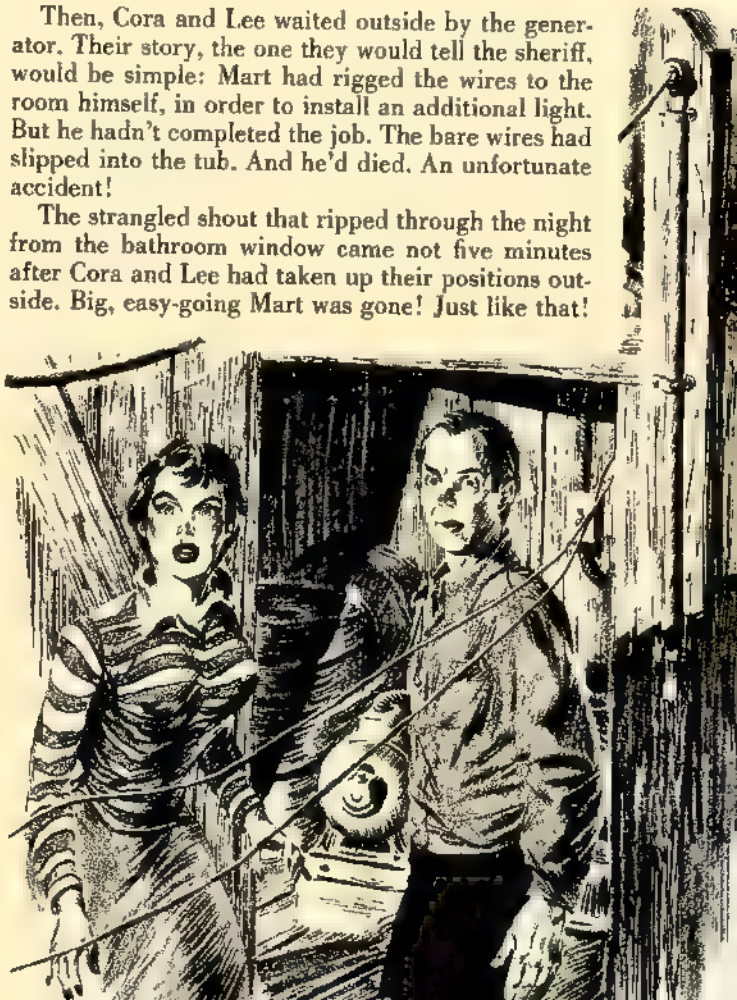
No more questions. No recriminations. Nothing. Lee was enthusiastic. A little afraid, but eager.

Lee was the one who strung the two wires from the generator to the bathroom window. It wasn't a bathroom, really. Just an alcove with a battered zinc tub which Mart had rigged to a hot water boiler. Fastening the wires so that they were hidden, with just their bare ends in the bath water, on the night Mart decided to take a bath, was child's play.



Then, Cora and Lee waited outside by the generator. Their story, the one they would tell the sheriff, would be simple: Mart had rigged the wires to the room himself, in order to install an additional light. But he hadn't completed the job. The bare wires had slipped into the tub. And he'd died. An unfortunate accident!

The strangled shout that ripped through the night from the bathroom window came not five minutes after Cora and Lee had taken up their positions outside. Big, easy-going Mart was gone! Just like that!



Cora went in first. Lee was shaking now. It was better if she were the one who attended to things. She walked directly to the alcove . . .

. . . And Mart came to meet her!

It was a wrenching shock, but Cora did not give herself away.

"Mart! I heard a shout! What happened?"

"It was . . . Buck!" There were tears in Mart's eyes. "He's . . . dead!"

"I . . . I was going to take a bath. I filled the tub, and Buck must have tried to lap a drink out of it. He . . . he's dead!" Mart shook his head, not understanding. He did not see Lee at the door, staring at him out of a dead white face. "There were wires! Two wires! I . . . I don't understand . . ."

"Wires?" Cora's words spilled out hurriedly. "Oh, Mart, no! It might have been you! Lee put those wires in. I asked him to!"

"I wanted more light in the bathroom." Cora's mind worked desperately, seeking an explanation. "He . . . he fastened the wires to the window-sill. He was going to finish the job tomorrow. They . . . they must have come loose . . ."

"Yeah. That . . . that's what must have happened." Lee picked up the thread, carried it a step further. "You're mighty lucky, Mart! Thank God it was the dog! I might have killed you!"

"You . . . might have at that." Mart was quiet. Almost . . . too quiet. Was there just a hint of suspicion in his expression?

Cora kissed him, held him, pretended. If there was suspicion in Mart, it vanished with her closeness.

"I'd better get rid of those wires and then take Buck out and bury him," said Mart.

He went into the alcove, and came out with the limp body of Buck cradled in his arms. His face was grim.

Lee was leaning against the wall, trembling, when Mart went out. Cora led him to his bed and made him lie down. When he would have spoken, she put a finger on his lips.

"No, Lee. Don't say anything," she soothed him. "It's all right. It's all right. You don't have to be afraid!"

"But . . . he suspects, Cora," Lee whimpered. "He does! He'll go to the police!"

"No," Cora shook her head. "Mart won't go to the police." She stroked his face. "And next time, it'll be different!"

"Cora, no," Lee shuddered. "No! There won't be a next time!"

"All right, Lee," she nodded. "There won't be a next time! We'll forget it!"

But there *would* be a next time! Cora *wouldn't* forget it! Even as she soothed Lee, she knew that. Lee deserved a chance! And he would have it! What did Mart matter? What was he to her?

Early the next morning, Cora drove the old Ford station wagon into town.

When she returned, she carried a package. Matt grinned like a little boy when he opened it. The red mackinaw inside was too loud, too flamboyant. But he was delighted.

"Cora, you shouldn't have," he said, not meaning it.

"But I wanted to, Mart," said Cora. "Last night when . . . when you were almost killed, I got to thinking. I've never bought you a gift." Cora went to him. "And I love you so, Mart."

Afterward, Lee watched Cora, wondering. But there was no way for him to know the truth. There was no way for him to know that the bright red jacket would make a perfect, unmistakable target in the shifting light of the woods. And anyway, Cora thought, the less Lee knew, the better. What she planned was for his own sake. It would be best to keep him out of it . . . this time! Safer! Surer!

It took a week. At the end of that time, Mart brought the hunting party to the woods. Three men from the city, with eager itchy trigger fingers, anxious to add to their trophy room displays. But the men weren't important. The important thing was that they were there . . . that when Mart went into the woods, he would not be alone.

Afterward, who was to know *who* had shot Mart? Men are often mistaken for game by amateur hunters!

Cora even insisted that Lee go along with the party, although she never let on to him what she had in mind. That way, the question would never be raised that Lee stalked and shot Mart. The others would swear to his actions.

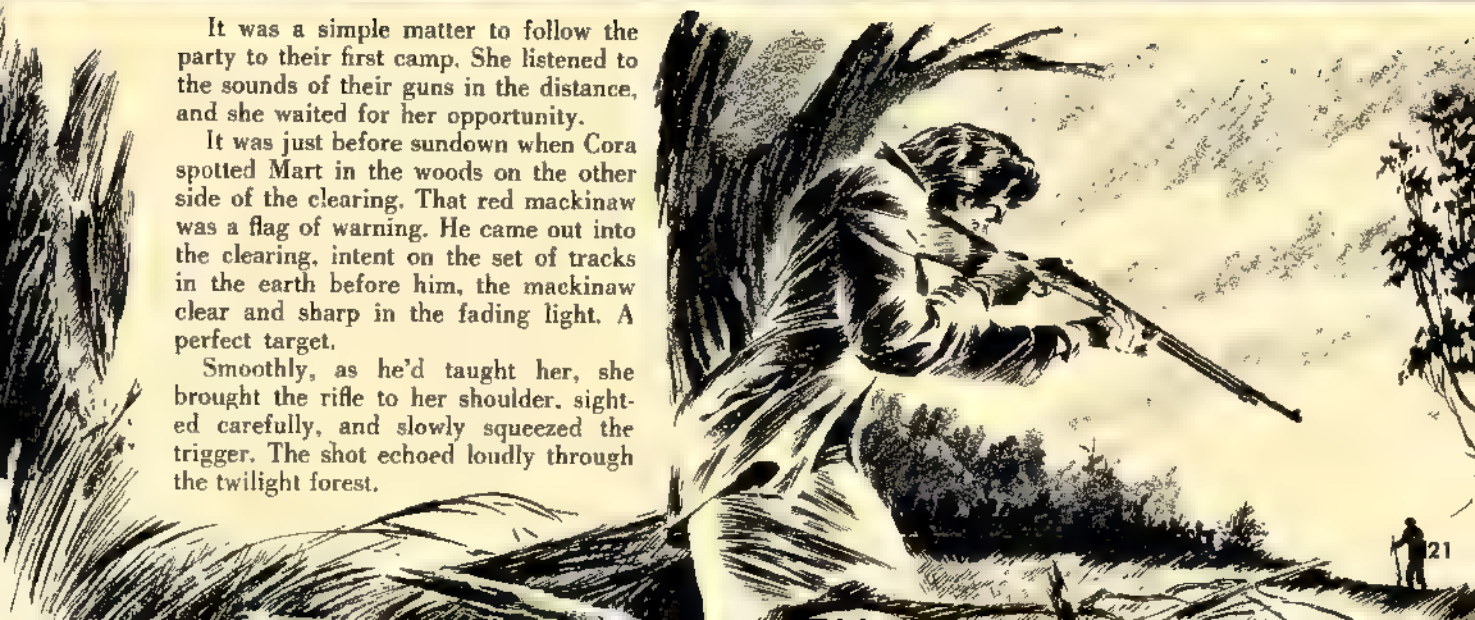
It was Cora who insisted that Mart wear his new mackinaw. She pouted prettily and told him how handsome he'd look in it, and he finally agreed. She saw Lee's half-smile as Mart put it on, and she wondered if he suspected what she planned.

But he said nothing and she watched them move off into the woods. Then, she went back into the cabin, took one of the rifles remaining, loaded it, and slipped into the woods after them.

It was a simple matter to follow the party to their first camp. She listened to the sounds of their guns in the distance, and she waited for her opportunity.

It was just before sundown when Cora spotted Mart in the woods on the other side of the clearing. That red mackinaw was a flag of warning. He came out into the clearing, intent on the set of tracks in the earth before him, the mackinaw clear and sharp in the fading light. A perfect target.

Smoothly, as he'd taught her, she brought the rifle to her shoulder, sighted carefully, and slowly squeezed the trigger. The shot echoed loudly through the twilight forest.



Cora was humming as she prepared her breakfast! She had been tired when she returned to the cabin, but a night's rest had taken care of that. She felt fine now. Rested and happy. Happy for Lee. To Mart, she gave hardly a thought. Mart was a clod who had served his purpose . . .

There! Footsteps. The men were returning. She suddenly wondered if they had Mart's body with them. Quickly, Cora composed her features. She would have to be properly surprised, properly shocked . . .

And the nightmare was still there when she came to.

Mart!

Mart was there!

Cora thought she laughed. But it was a scream that ripped from her throat as Mart spoke to her . . . told her . . .

The man in the doorway told her what happened. Softly. Gently. Compassionately. An accident, he called it. A stray shot. Cora must be brave . . .

Cora's lips moved, but no sound came. Her eyes closed, opened, closed again . . . as if she were trying to blink away a nightmare. But the nightmare remained when her eyes opened. The nightmare stood there, pitying her, until the room heaved and spun, and Cora sank to the rough-hewn floorboards, unconscious.

"I just don't understand how it happened, Cora. Whoever did it must have *seen* Lee! I don't see how they could have helped *not* seeing him . . . in that red mackinaw of mine! He was wearing it!" Mart paused, then shook his head. "He . . . he traded me that fancy electric razor of his I always admired for it. I . . . I didn't think you'd mind . . . seeing he was your brother . . . and you were so crazy about him . . ."

THE END

CLEAN SWEEP

Almost, in that insane instant before cold reason reasserted itself, Matthews used the knife. What Sarah had just said could easily destroy the pleasant even tenure of his well-ordered life. But a crime of passion . . . a sudden violent unplanned action was not Matthew's way. Calmly, he placed the knife back on his plate, his pale eyes fixed unwaveringly on Sarah. She was crying, and she'd not bothered to fix her face. The morning light picked out the grey in her hair, accentuated the old-maid gauntness of her face.

"You're a fool, Sarah," Matthews said. "When you accuse a husband of cheating, it's customary to name the other woman. Can you?"

"No . . ." Sarah's voice grated on his ears. It was so like her. Sere. Dried up. There was no passion in Sarah. Not any more. Nor did it occur to Matthews that he was the reason . . . that long years of overbearing tyranny and coldness had changed Sarah from an eager girl into . . . into this. He was amazed when she leaped up, clutching her dressing gown closed over her sagging breasts.

"No, I can't! But there is a woman! I know! I've had you watched! For months!"

There was more of course. Much more. Sarah was quite right. But Matthew despised weakness, and Sarah was weak, hysterical, her face twisted, her mouth writhing.

"How ugly you are!" Matthew hissed, and then it was quiet in the big, expensively furnished breakfast room.

It was not until he was on his way out that Sarah spoke again.

"I'm divorcing you, Paul," she said softly. "I'm flying to Reno in a week . . ."

Matthews didn't even bother to turn. There had been so many such threats. Outside, before he stepped into the big convertible which Sarah's money had bought, he breathed deeply. Matthew was a sensualist, in his own way. The air felt good against his florid, well-barbered face. The day had begun badly, but perhaps the rest of it would not be quite so unpleasant.

Only . . . it was! After Sarah, there was Edna!

It happened an hour after Matthew arrived at the office. He was at his desk when soft arms were around his neck from behind and soft lips touched his cheek gently. Smiling, Matthew stood up and pulled Edna toward him. Edna was a balm to his ego. A year ago, when she'd come to work for him as his private secretary, she would never have dreamed of letting him kiss her here in the office. But, little by little, he'd managed to break down her moral defenses. Quite thoroughly.

"Darling, darling," Edna whispered. "I love you so . . ."

There had been nothing of love in Matthew's kiss. It had been all physical. As the whole affair had been just that. The luxury of a slim, warm young body pressed to his own. But of course Edna knew nothing of that.

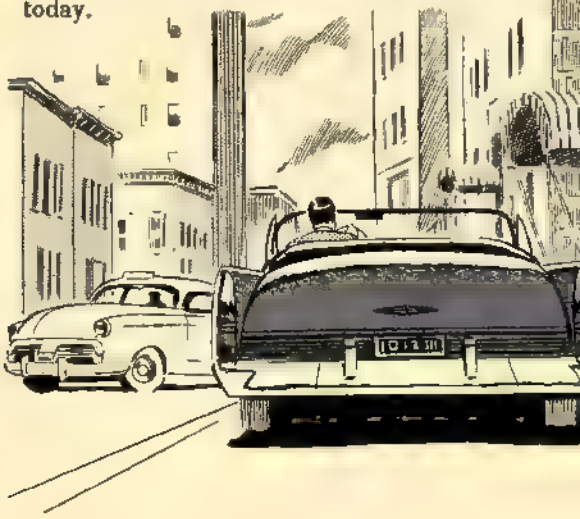
"If only we could be married," she sighed. "If only *she* wouldn't stand in our way . . ."

Matthew's stiffened. Marry? That again? Suddenly he was fed up with Edna. Fed up with her simpering softness. Fed up with her weakness.

"I have an appointment," he said abruptly.

It was barely noon when he left the office. Edna was becoming a problem. And Sarah's nagging was becoming intolerable. It had been one lousy day . . . so far.

He drove east, then north to the plush seventies . . . to a certain small apartment. It was early. Karen would probably still be asleep. He'd left her quite late the night before. But he needed something. A release from the unpleasant tensions of today.



He let himself in. Karen stared at him lazily as he entered the bedroom. Neither of them spoke. She was still in bed, the flimsy stuff of her nightgown barely concealing the full voluptuous curves which had first attracted Matthews to her. He let his eyes travel over her, amused at a sudden thought:

Which one had Sarah's detectives seen him with? Edna . . . or Karen?

Sarah and Edna were fools! he thought. *Why couldn't all women be like Karen here . . . taking what they wanted without blatting like sheep about marriage and morality?*

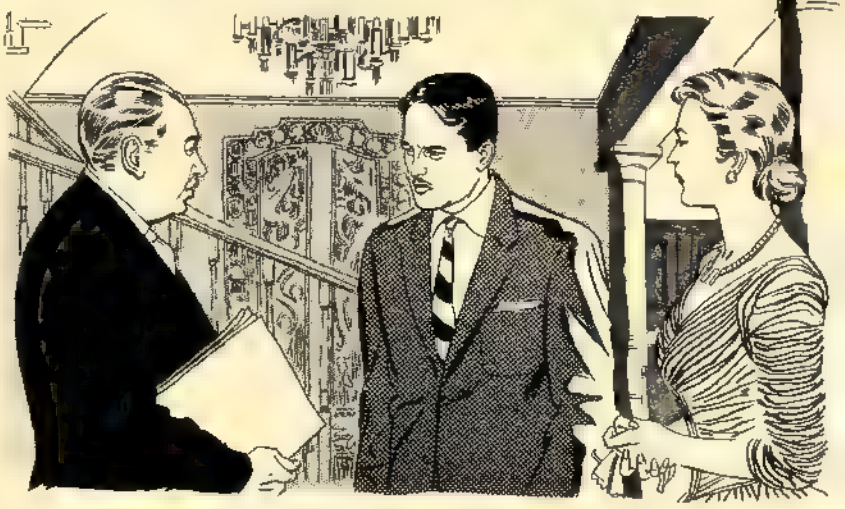
Karen had worked in his office . . . was still working there . . . but this was her vacation, and she'd wanted the luxuries he'd been able to give her. So instead of going away, she'd moved in here. It had been as simple as that.

Matthew moved across the room and sat down on the edge of the bed. He touched Karen's warm skin. This was a woman he could be happy with. Then he pulled her towards him almost violently and buried his face in the perfumed softness of her shoulder. There was no tenderness. Matthews would not have known how to be tender. But then, when a man feels the need for a drink, for food, for excitement of any kind, he does not feel that need with tenderness.

Later, he told Karen about Sarah . . . and about Edna. And they laughed together at the blindness and stupidity of the woman he had married, and the woman who expected marriage. Yes, Karen knew all about Edna. They were friends. But Karen and Matthews were a pair, and so she could even enjoy a vicarious thrill of pleasure in hearing him speak of how easy Edna had been.

Matthews felt content when he went home that evening. But his contentment lasted only through the front door. Sarah was waiting with Cooper, her attorney. It was Cooper who handed Matthew the papers.

"The divorce action has already started," Cooper said.



"I could have had you served by someone else," Cooper went on, "but I wanted to speak to you with Mrs. Matthews. She has a very generous offer to make."

"So . . ." Matthews said, glaring at her, "you really meant it this time!"

Sarah said nothing. It was as if, having come this far, there was nothing left in her. *God!* Matthews thought. *God, she was ugly!*

"Well?" Matthews snarled, turning to Cooper. This was something he could understand. Direct action. "Well, what's the generous offer?"

"As you know, Mrs. Matthews owns the business which you have been directing since your marriage . . ."

"I know, I know!" Matthews was deliberately brutal. "That's why I married her! What of it?"

"Only this," Cooper mouthed the proposition coldly. "If you will agree not to contest the divorce action, and if you will step out of the business, Mrs. Matthews will give you a settlement of ten thousand dollars per year for life!"

"And if I refuse?" Matthews smiled.

"If you refuse, you will be fired and receive nothing!"

"Just . . . like that, eh?" Matthew's smile vanished.

"Just . . . like that!" Sarah's voice seemed to come from far away, but there was something new in it. A purpose. For an instant, Matthew felt as he had felt that morning. Like killing her. His rage had dissipated then, because he had been certain she would not carry out her threat. It was different now!

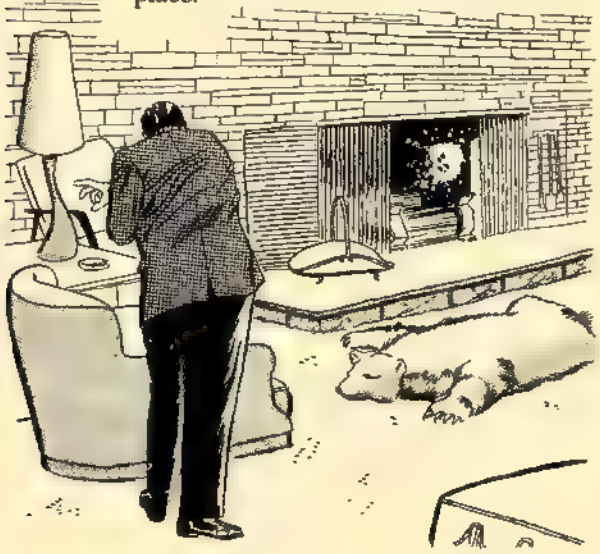
Yet, when he turned away, he gave no hint of the sudden fury within him other than the flush which colored his thick neck. "I'll think about it," he said. "How long have I?"

"Mrs. Matthews flies to Reno on the eleventh. That's just one week from today . . ." Cooper announced.

Matthews went to his room.

From the decanter on the night table, he poured himself a stiff drink. He had a week. Just one week! After that, there would be *no more* of what he had come to take for granted.

He hurled the glass across the room, shattering it against the fieldstone fireplace.



But from that moment on, he permitted himself no anger.

"I've got to think," he told Karen the next day. "She means it. This time, Sarah really means it! She can turn me out! Ironic, isn't it? That dried up little——! *She* can turn *me* out!"

"If you let her . . ." Karen whispered.

"Yes." Matthews nodded. "If . . . I . . . let her . . ."

The thought was born then. Out of Karen's words and Karen's sidelong cat-like look. Matthews would have thought of it himself, in time. Karen merely made it happen sooner. There was not even the need to hint, to be circumspect. Karen understood.

"It won't be easy," Matthews said. "Cooper knows the situation. If anything happens to Sarah, I'll be the first one he'll suspect!"

Karen smiled. She was like an animal when she put her arms around him. "We have a week . . ." she said.

The embrace that followed was colored . . . tinged with the unholy excitement, the uncertainty of what was to come within the week.

But it was a bad week. The days went swiftly. Too swiftly. And to make matters worse, Edna noticed Matthew's preoccupation. In the end, she came to him. Soft. Pleading.

"Paul, what . . . what is it? It . . . It's been weeks since you came to see me!"

"Is it . . . is it anything I've done?" she whined.

Weeks? Had it been weeks since he'd gone to Edna? Of course it was. Edna wasn't like Karen. What Edna had given him was her love. What Karen gave him was . . . different. He wished suddenly that Edna would get out of his life . . . leave him alone.

"No, it's nothing you've done," he said harshly.

"Then . . . come tonight, Paul. Please? I . . . I can't go on like this." Suddenly there were tears in Edna's eyes. "Paul, I've got to talk to you. I . . ."

"I'm not a bad girl, Paul! We've got to settle things. You've promised for so long. You said we'd be married . . ."

"I've got a wife, Edna!" Matthews almost spat the words. The stock, set words which had stood him in such good stead with so many others. Blast this little fool! He had more important things to think about than her weak Victorian sense of decency.

"I . . . know you have a wife, Paul! But . . . I mean it! I . . . I just can't go on living this way!"

"Perhaps . . ." she went on, "perhaps if I went to see her, if I talked to her, if I told her that we love each other, perhaps she'd listen to me and give you your divorce. Let me talk to her . . ."

"No" he snapped.

"Paul, please. I don't want to go against you. But if you won't talk to her again, then I . . . I will!"

So . . . Edna was beginning to wonder, too. Edna was beginning to doubt. The dumb, calf-like adoration she felt for him was still there, yes. But now the others would begin. The demands. The tears. The nagging. The cajoling.

"No," Matthews said. "I'll talk to her . . ."

It had to be done. Matthews put his arms around her. "You don't know what Sarah's like. You've never met her. Darling, don't you see? She'd just pour poison over you. Hurt you. No. I'll talk to her. Tonight. I promise. Then, I'll come to your place . . ."

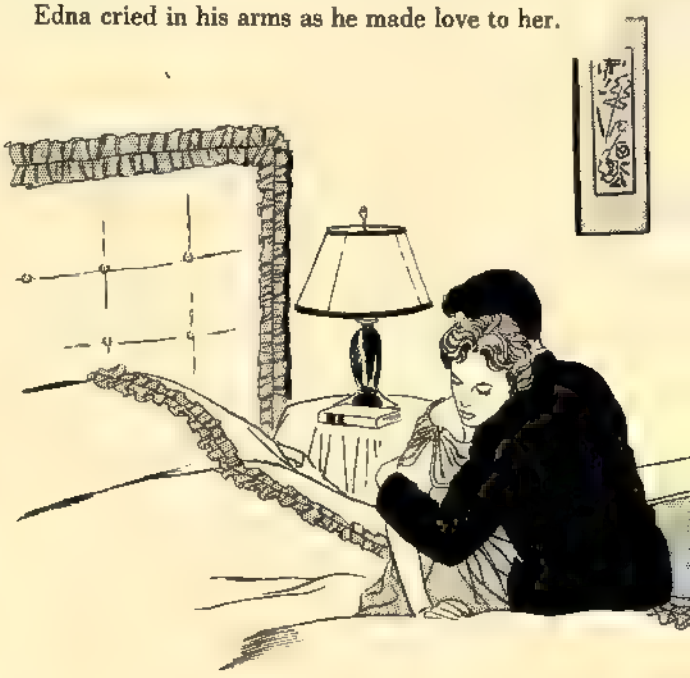
Matthews didn't mean any of it, at first. The words were for no other purpose than to keep Edna and Sarah apart. Sarah'd had enough of him as it was. But afterward, it all fitted together like the parts of a jig-saw puzzle. Afterwards, at home, his eyes suddenly slitted.

Of course! It was all so perfect! He could be rid of Sarah . . . and Edna too! With one sweep! And the money, the business, Karen . . . everything would be his!

So he did go to see Edna that night. He smiled and pretended to be happy. He held her close and felt her trembling at the sudden realization of her dreams.

"She agreed," he lied. "Sarah has agreed to give me my freedom. Do you realize what that means, Edna? We can be married now. Married . . ."

Edna cried in his arms as he made love to her.



He did not push things. He waited. It was in the office the next day that he told her the rest.

"It's been hard for you, hasn't it?" he said, holding her hand. "Waiting . . . waiting all this time." Then, as if on a sudden impulse: "Edna, why don't you go away for a few weeks? Take your vacation Now! You have one coming anyway. You could go away, and I could join you there in a few days. Please? You look so tired. Please, honey? For me...?"

She protested, at first. But Matthews would not take no for an answer. He was gently insistent . . . but insistent! He made the arrangements that same day. An airline ticket to California. A hotel reservation. He told her about it that afternoon.

"All you have to do is bring your bags to the office in the morning, and I'll drive you to the airport."

It was so easy. Edna was in a delirium of happiness. Yet even then, the softness was there. Matthews almost laughed when she shook her head.

"I . . . I can't go, Paul. Not yet. Karen will be so disappointed!"

"Karen?"

"Yes. She's still away on *her* vacation. And I promised her that when I went on mine, she could fill in for me . . . as your secretary. She'd be so disappointed. You know how ambitious she is."

Matthews knew. He smiled, inside.

"Always thinking of others. No wonder I love you," he said, taking her in his arms and kissing her soft cheek. "But don't you worry about Karen. I'll explain to her when she gets back. I'll give her a bonus or something. Right now, we've got to think about us. Only us. You . . . and me. Right?"

"Oh, Paul," Edna's eyes went misty. "Yes . . . yes."

The little fool! Matthews and Karen laughed about that later, before he told Karen her part in what he had planned.

It was Karen who bought the alarm clock in the out of the way shop on the far side of town.

Matthews supplied the dynamite. Six sticks, stolen from a building construction shack. That part was risky, but necessary.

He put the bomb together in his garage. Portable radio batteries would set off the dynamite when the alarm went off. It was crude, but it would work.

When he brought the bomb to the office in the morning, wrapped in cotton wadding to kill the ticking of the clock and neatly encased in a gift-box bearing the imprint of an expensive women's shop, Edna was already there with her bags.

"This is for you, darling," he kissed her and gave her the package. "A little surprise. To make you think of me when you get to California. Don't you dare open it until you arrive. Promise?"

Edna promised . . . naturally. It was his wish! He placed the package in one of her suitcases himself, and laughed again to himself when she mentioned Karen for the second time.

"She'll be so upset, Paul," she said. "I feel badly for her. I'm so . . . so happy, that I want everyone to be happy . . ."

The suitcase snapped shut. "She will be. I promise you." Matthew smiled dryly. "More than you know!" He looked around Edna's office.

There was only one thing remaining to be done.

"Now you take your bags out to the door and wait for me," Matthews told her. "I have a phone call to make. Then we'll be on our way . . ."

The phone call was to Sarah.

"I just wanted you to know that I accept your offer," he said. "That is, provided you still intend to go through with the divorce."

"I'll be on the eleven-thirty plane for Reno," she said flatly. "Cooper will make the necessary arrangements with you. I'll call him before I leave."

She hung up without saying goodbye. And Matthews smiled. There had been no change of plan then. Sarah would be on the eleven-thirty plane to Reno. The same plane which went to California. Matthews had checked that point. The same plane on which Edna would be a passenger!

Only the plane would never arrive at Reno! Because at precisely one o'clock, an alarm would ring, and two wires attached to a set of batteries would send an impulse through six sticks of dynamite, detonating them!

In his convertible, driving to the airport, Matthews was talkative, animated. And Edna was starry-eyed.

"A few days, honey," Matthews said. "Just a few days and I'll be with you. And this time it will be for good . . ."

He was careful at the airport. Careful not to run into Sarah. He saw her in the waiting room, so he and Edna waited outside while her bags were taken aboard the plane.

Everything went perfectly. Until the loudspeaker blared. Then, suddenly, Matthews was sweating.

"*Flight number seventeen to Reno and Los Angeles will be subject to a delay . . .*"

"What is it, Paul?" Edna asked, seeing him pale.

"It . . . it's n-nothing," he said.

"I . . . I just felt a little dizzy for a second. Look, you wait here. I . . . I'd better find out how long your flight will be held up."

There was a risk involved in entering the airport. Sarah might see him. There might be awkward questions. But it was a risk he had to take. If the bomb were to detonate itself while the plane was still on the field, there would be fragments to trace. His plan would fail!

"It won't be long, sir," the flight clerk said.

"Just a minor mechanical adjustment on one of the engines. Maybe fifteen minutes . . "

Matthews breathed a sigh of relief. *That* was all right, then! Only, when he turned, Sarah was there.

"I didn't expect you to come down to see me off, Paul," she eyed him coldly.

"I . . . I didn't . . ." Matthews stammered. "I . . . I . . ." His brain whirled. "Sarah, I . . . I came to ask you not to go. I . . . I've been thinking . . ." He knew it would do no good, but he had to say something.

"You begging, Paul?" Sarah was almost triumphant. "I never expected this. Go on. I'll listen."

"But you won't change your mind, will you?"

"No, I won't. But I'm glad you came. I'm glad I can say 'no' to you. I'm glad you're so afraid of losing my money, that you'd even beg. It pays me back a little, for all the years . . ."

Matthews walked away. Sarah suspected nothing. Good. Let her have her little moment of gloating. He'd have his.

Outside, on the ramp, Edna clung to him. "Oh, Paul, Paul," she whined, "I hate being away from you. Even for a few days. You will come soon, won't you? And we will be married as soon as you get your divorce, won't we?"

Sarah, Edna . . . Edna, Sarah. They were both alike. Clinging. Demanding. Weak. Soft. It would be good to be rid of them. One quick, blinding burst of light and heat and sound, and he would be free of them. Both. At one time. A clean sweep!

"I . . . I'll say goodbye here," he told Edna when the loudspeakers announced take-off of flight number seventeen. "If I don't, I . . . I might not let you go."

Then the plane was airborne.

There was no nervousness in Matthews when he drove back to the office. That did not come until a few seconds before one.

He was sitting at his desk, watching the desk clock.

It was only when Karen came in, smiling, that he was distracted . . . that he noticed the memo on his desk, written in Edna's clear open script.

"Darling," the note read. *"Forgive me, but I couldn't leave knowing how badly Karen will feel. So I've left something for her. Your going-away gift to me. I know it must be something special, so perhaps when she gets it, she won't feel hurt. Would you give it to her? The package is in the top drawer of your desk . . ."*

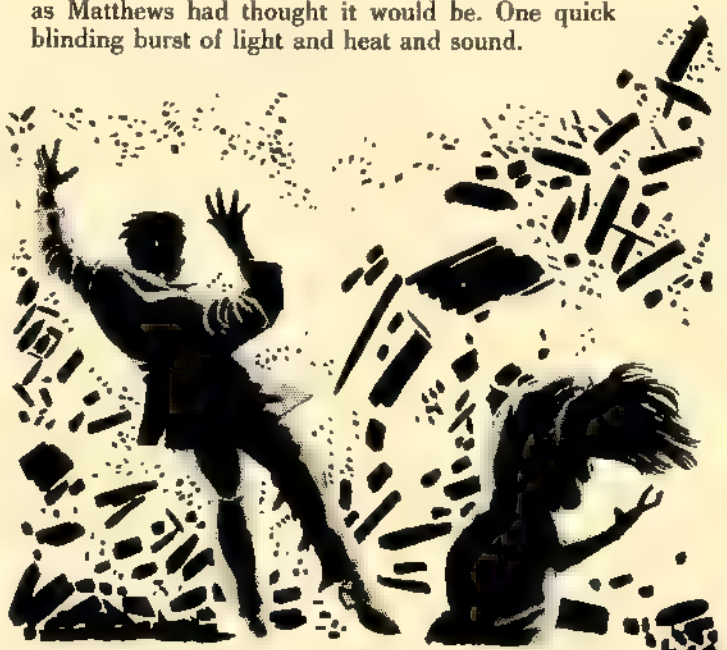
The rest was blurred. Just for an instant, Matthews sat paralyzed, his eyes on the clock. Four seconds left!

His fingers clawed for the desk drawer. And then Karen had her arms around him, holding him, her teeth nipping his ear . . . a promise of things to come.

"Soon, Paul," she whispered. "Soon. I couldn't stay away. I had to be with you . . . when it happened . . ."

"Let go of me!" The words were a strangled scream. Matthews tried to stand up . . . to tear himself loose from Karen's embrace. But it was a mistake. Her arms tightened in a startled reflex-action, holding him. It took a precious second to break away.

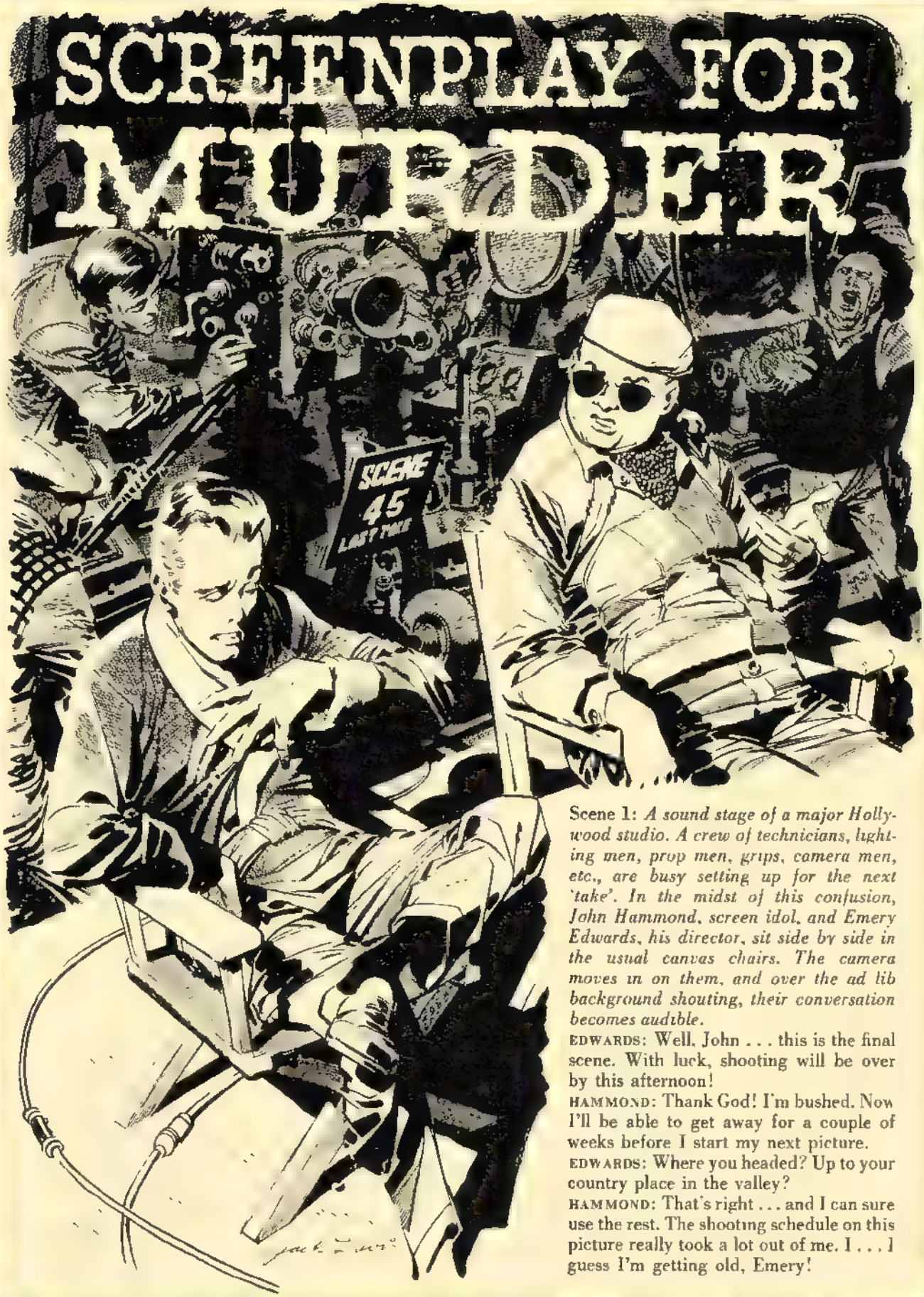
Too late. There were no seconds left. It was just as Matthews had thought it would be. One quick blinding burst of light and heat and sound.



Matthews might have laughed in that fraction of an instant before he and Karen died. But there wasn't even time for that.

THE END

SCREENPLAY FOR MURDER



Scene 1: *A sound stage of a major Hollywood studio. A crew of technicians, lighting men, prop men, grips, camera men, etc., are busy setting up for the next 'take'. In the midst of this confusion, John Hammond, screen idol, and Emery Edwards, his director, sit side by side in the usual canvas chairs. The camera moves in on them, and over the ad lib background shouting, their conversation becomes audible.*

EDWARDS: Well, John . . . this is the final scene. With luck, shooting will be over by this afternoon!

HAMMOND: Thank God! I'm bushed. Now I'll be able to get away for a couple of weeks before I start my next picture.

EDWARDS: Where you headed? Up to your country place in the valley?

HAMMOND: That's right . . . and I can sure use the rest. The shooting schedule on this picture really took a lot out of me. I . . . I guess I'm getting old, Emery!

EDWARDS: What? You getting old, John? Don't make me laugh! Why you're the heart-throb of millions of love-starved American women. To them, you'll never get old. You'll always be young and handsome.

HAMMOND: One of these days, those millions of women are going to be in for the shock of their lives. When the make-up no longer hides the wrinkles. *(He pauses, looks around.)* Say! What's holding up the scene, anyway?

EDWARDS: *(Rises from his chair)* You've got me! *(He shouts across the set to an assistant director.)* Hey, Max! What's holding it up?

MAX: Mr. Hammond's stand-in, Mr. Edwards! We're waiting for him so we can set up the lights.

EDWARDS: Well, where in blazes is he? Didn't he show up today?

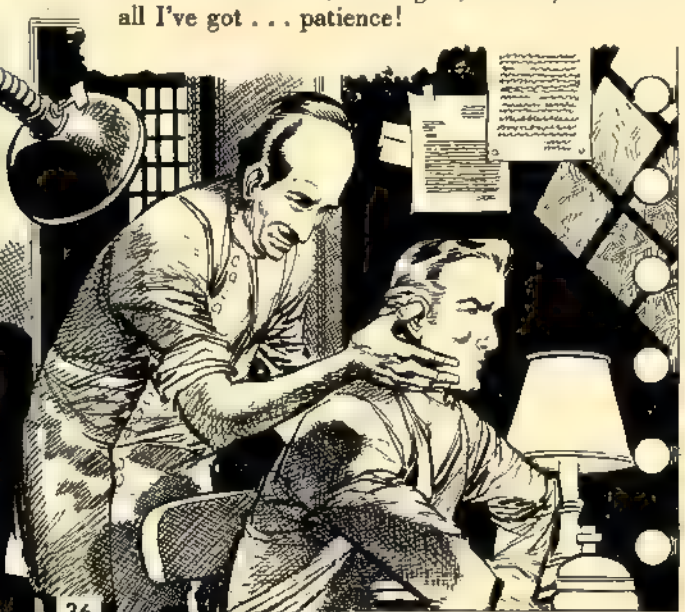
MAX: He came in late, Mr. Edwards. He's in with Pierre, having his make-up put on.

Cut and dissolve to Scene 2: *The make-up department just off the sound stage. John Hammond's stand-in, Russel Slade, sits before a lighted mirror as Pierre Marsel, the studio make-up man, works over him.*

SLADE: For Pete's sake, Pierre! Hurry up! I'm late!

PIERRE: I'm working as fast as I can, M'sieu Slade. Have a little patience. I will be through shortly.

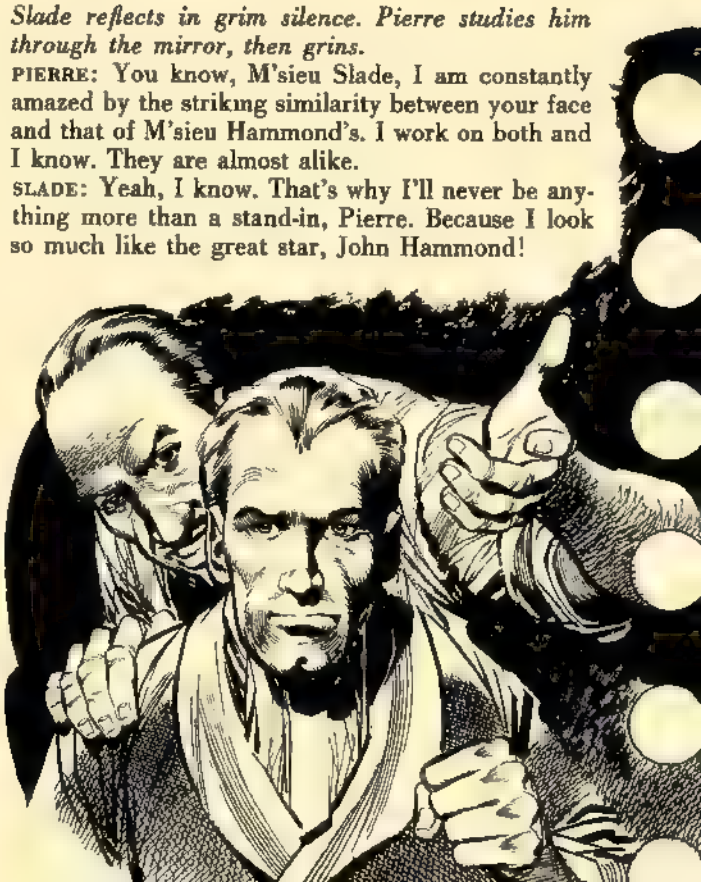
SLADE: Patience? *(He laughs.)* Pierre, that's about all I've got . . . patience!



Slade reflects in grim silence. Pierre studies him through the mirror, then grins.

PIERRE: You know, M'sieu Slade, I am constantly amazed by the striking similarity between your face and that of M'sieu Hammond's. I work on both and I know. They are almost alike.

SLADE: Yeah, I know. That's why I'll never be anything more than a stand-in, Pierre. Because I look so much like the great star, John Hammond!



Pierre studies Russell Slade in the mirror. His grin vanishes. He bends forward and whispers.

PIERRE: So much? Why if I tried, M'sieu Slade, I could make you look *exactly* like M'sieu Hammond! No one, unless he knew you both intimately off the screen, would be able to tell you apart!

SLADE: *(Glancing up at Pierre with a quick look of sudden understanding)* Really, Pierre?

PIERRE: Really, M'sieu Slade. In fact, if anything were to, say, happen to M'sieu Hammond, the studio could use you in his place . . . and the public would never know the difference!

SLADE: You . . . you think they'd do that, Pierre?

PIERRE: Why, but of course! They would be forced to! John Hammond is a great box office attraction. You do not just . . . poof . . . give up that kind of business so easily. Not if there's a way to save it!

Cut and fade in to Scene 3: *The sound stage. John Hammond is pacing the floor angrily. Emery Edwards is trying to calm him. Most of the grips and technicians are finished with their work and are standing around watching Hammond's display of temper.*

HAMMOND: Where is he, blast it! We've wasted twenty minutes already, waiting for him!

EDWARDS: Take it easy, John. He'll be ready soon. Don't get yourself worked up. It's the last day of shooting and . . . Ah, here he comes now!

Enter Mr. Russel Slade, breathlessly. John Hammond stands with arms folded in annoyance.

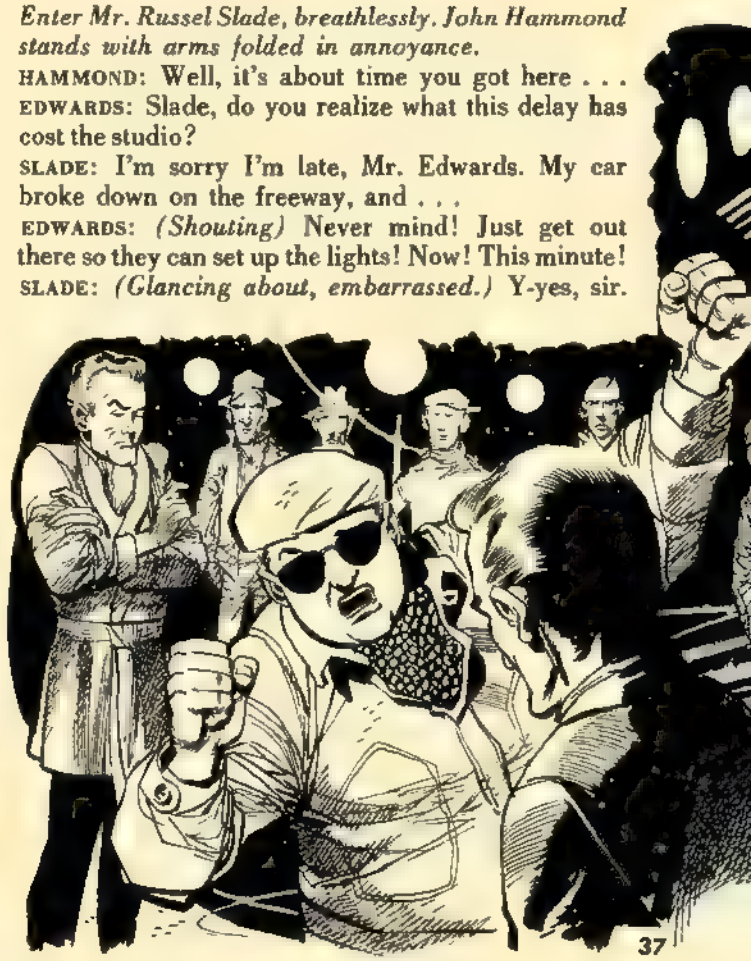
HAMMOND: Well, it's about time you got here . . .

EDWARDS: Slade, do you realize what this delay has cost the studio?

SLADE: I'm sorry I'm late, Mr. Edwards. My car broke down on the freeway, and . . .

EDWARDS: *(Shouting)* Never mind! Just get out there so they can set up the lights! Now! This minute!

SLADE: *(Glancing about, embarrassed.)* Y-yes, sir.



Dolly back to show a long shot of Russell Slade as the sound stage technicians go to work on him. Show the assistant director jostle him into the scene position, chalking his foot-placement on the stage floor. Show the lighting director bustling about, calling for battery after battery of blinding kliegs. Show the camera director checking for exposure readings. The entire scene is one of harrassment and confusion . . . with Slade, perspiring under the heat of the lights, fighting back his inner rage.

ASST. DIR.: Hold it right there, Slade! Don't move! Don't move an inch!
LIGHTING DIR.: That's good! Now the overheads! Hold it! Douse that spot! Bring down that flood! Good! That's it . . .
CAMERA DIR.: Head up, Mr. Slade! Up! Now, this way a little! That's it! Hold it! Okay, Joe! Shoot it at 5.6 . . .
EDWARDS: Let's go! Let's go . . .

Move in for a close-up of Russell Slade's perspiring face. His expression betrays his hate for what he considers to be the indignities he must suffer in his job as stand-in for John Hammond.
ASST. DIR.: Okay, Mr. Edwards! Everything's set!
EDWARDS: All right, everybody! We're going to shoot the scene! Places, please! Let's make it good! Off the set, Slade. Slade! Move! Off the set . . . but stay on call!

Slade moves off the set grimly as John Hammond comes out of the cool shadows. With the preparations for the shooting of the scene finished, Slade is no longer needed. He watches from the sidelines as Hammond steps into the chalk marks and a make-up assistant deftly touches up his face with powder.
EDWARDS: Ready, John?
HAMMOND: All ready.
ASST. DIR.: Quiet on the set! This is a take!

Cut and dissolve to Scene 4: *The studio gate. A convertible approaches from within the studio lot. It is an old car which has seen better days. Slade is at the wheel. He nods to the gatekeeper as he drives slowly through.*

SLADE: Good night, Larry.

GATEMAN: Good night, Mr. Hammond.

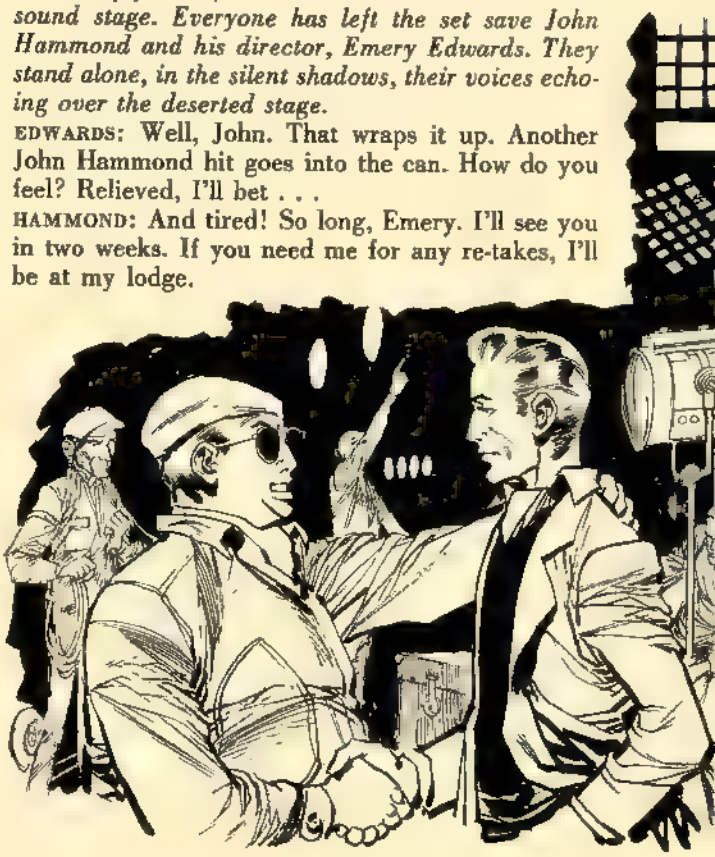
SLADE: (Laughs) Thanks for the compliment, Larry.

GATEMAN: (Peers at Slade) Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Slade. I thought you were Mr. Hammond.

Cut sharply and fade in to Scene 5: *Back on the sound stage. Everyone has left the set save John Hammond and his director, Emery Edwards. They stand alone, in the silent shadows, their voices echoing over the deserted stage.*

EDWARDS: Well, John. That wraps it up. Another John Hammond hit goes into the can. How do you feel? Relieved, I'll bet . . .

HAMMOND: And tired! So long, Emery. I'll see you in two weeks. If you need me for any re-takes, I'll be at my lodge.



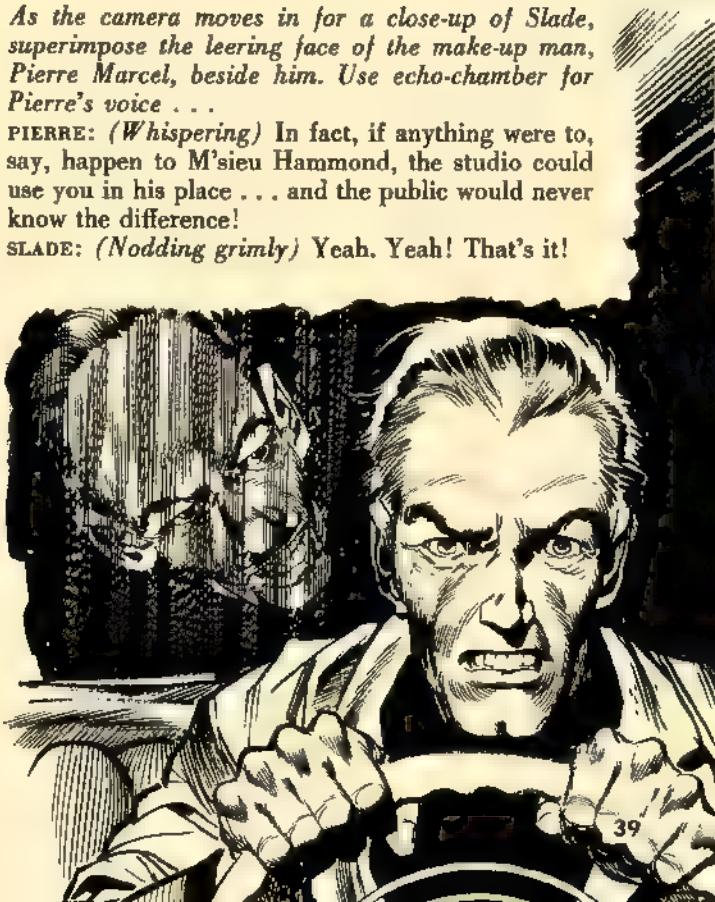
Cut and dissolve to Russell Slade, driving home. Start from a medium long-shot and move in as his car roars along the highway. He stares grimly at the road ahead. Fade out sound of engine and bring up recorded thoughts.

HAMMOND: What a rotten deal! Even the gatekeeper thought I was John Hammond! I'll never get anywhere in Hollywood as long as *he's* around! I'll always be nothing more than his stand-in!

As the camera moves in for a close-up of Slade, superimpose the leering face of the make-up man, Pierre Marcel, beside him. Use echo-chamber for Pierre's voice . . .

PIERRE: *(Whispering)* In fact, if anything were to, say, happen to M'sieu Hammond, the studio could use you in his place . . . and the public would never know the difference!

SLADE: *(Nodding grimly)* Yeah. Yeah! That's it!



Now we get the full close-up of Russell Slade. His grim, almost maniacal expression. His glazed, staring eyes. His voice is hoarse as he snarls aloud.

SLADE: That's it! If Hammond were dead, I'd be made! The studio couldn't afford to lose a money-maker like him! They'd consider anything, even a crazy idea like Marcel's! That's it! I've got to get rid of John Hammond! I've got to kill him!

Cut sharply to black and then fade in to John Hammond's luxurious Beverly Hills home. There are some suitcases in the foyer, and Billings, the butler, is helping Hammond into his coat.

HAMMOND: I'll be back in two weeks, Billings. If anything urgent comes up, you know where to reach me.

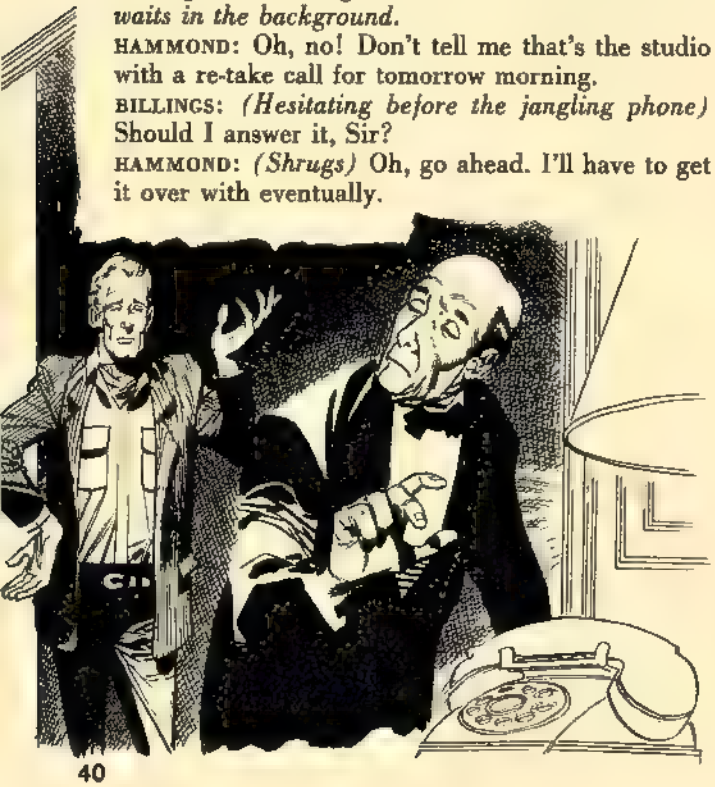
BILLINGS: Yes, sir. Veddy good, sir.

Cut to phone ringing. Dolly away to show Billings coming across living room to answer it. Hammond waits in the background.

HAMMOND: Oh, no! Don't tell me that's the studio with a re-take call for tomorrow morning.

BILLINGS: *(Hesitating before the jangling phone)* Should I answer it, Sir?

HAMMOND: *(Shrugs)* Oh, go ahead. I'll have to get it over with eventually.



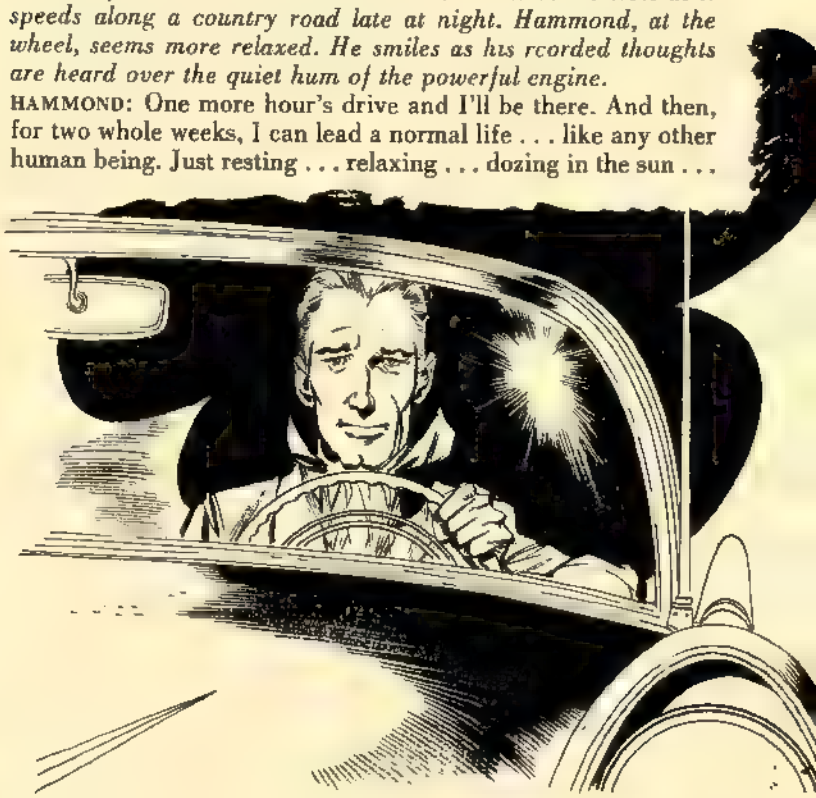
Billings picks up the phone, talks quietly for a few seconds, then covers the mouthpiece, turning to Hammond.

BILLINGS: It's Mr. Slade, your studio stand-in. He wants to speak to you. He wants to know if you'll be in tonight. He says it's urgent.

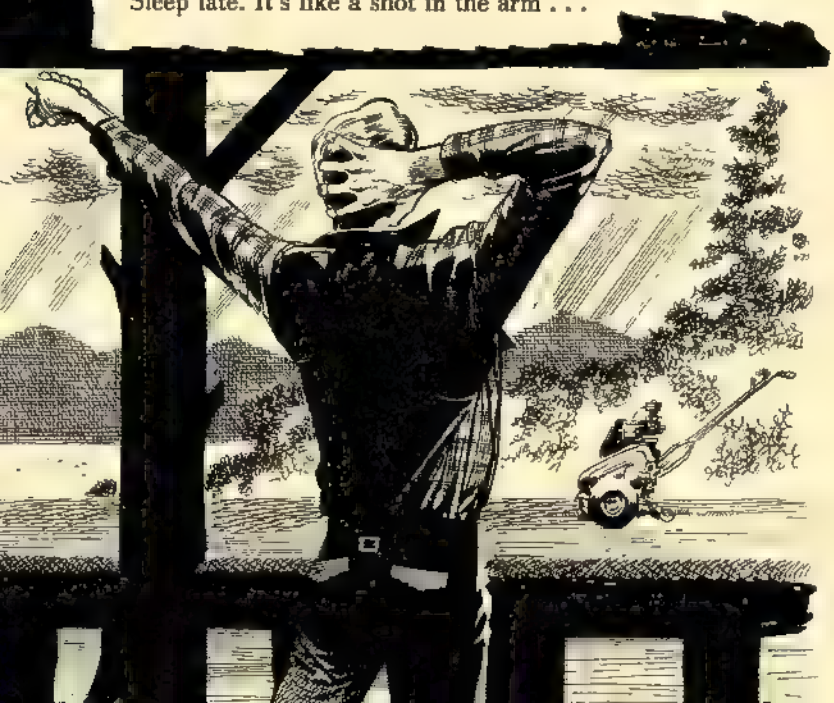
HAMMOND: *(Shaking his head and waving his hand)* No. No. Tell him I've already left for my lodge. Tell him to see me when I get back.

Show Billings turn back to phone as Hammond picks up bags and exits house.
BILLINGS: I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Slade, but you just missed Mr. Hammond. He's already left for his lodge in the valley. You can see him when he gets back. Yes. In about two weeks. Yes. Sorry . . .

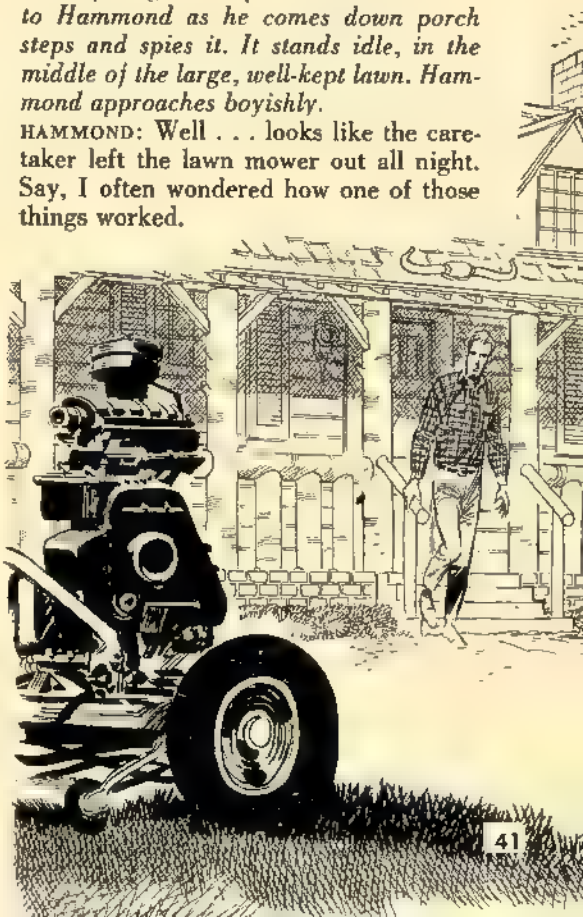
Cut and fade in to Hammond's white Cadillac convertible as it speeds along a country road late at night. Hammond, at the wheel, seems more relaxed. He smiles as his recorded thoughts are heard over the quiet hum of the powerful engine.
HAMMOND: One more hour's drive and I'll be there. And then, for two whole weeks, I can lead a normal life . . . like any other human being. Just resting . . . relaxing . . . dozing in the sun . . .



Cut to black and fade in to Scene 9: *Outside of John Hammond's rustic lodge. Dub in sound of birds and crickets as the camera pans slowly across a quiet lake, over a rolling lawn to the cabin porch. It is morning. Hammond comes out on the porch, yawns and stretches. The scene is one of peaceful contentment, and yet there is an air of impending doom, possibly symbolized by heavy grey clouds overhead and a distant rumble of thunder.*
HAMMOND: *(Yawn)* Ahhh . . . this is the life. No early calls. Sleep late. It's like a shot in the arm . . .



Shoot past gasoline-powered lawn mower to Hammond as he comes down porch steps and spies it. It stands idle, in the middle of the large, well-kept lawn. Hammond approaches boyishly.
HAMMOND: Well . . . looks like the caretaker left the lawn mower out all night. Say, I often wondered how one of those things worked.



Dolly back from lawn mower as Hammond approaches and begins to examine it.

HAMMOND: This must be the starting rope, draped over the handle. Think I'll start 'er up.

He wraps rope around starting drum and yanks hard. The engine coughs and begins to sputter . . .

Cut sharply to Russell Slade's old car sputtering to a stop amid heavy shrubbery off a tree-lined road. He looks around furtively.

SLADE: So far, so good. I'd better go the rest of the way on foot so no one spots me. If I know Hammond, he'll be alone up there and it'll be easy . . .

Slade gets out of his car and draws a gun from his pocket. He starts through the underbrush in the direction of Hammond's lakeside lodge. His jaw is set. He grimaces.

SLADE: I'm coming, John Hammond! And in a few minutes, I'll be the sole owner of the face a million women are mad about!

Cut to John Hammond, walking briskly behind the sputtering lawn mower as it bumps over his spacious property.

HAMMOND: Hah! And I've felt sorry for old Grimes because of this tremendous lawn he has to cut! Why, all you have to do with one of these things is walk behind it and guide it! It rides along by itself!

Cut to Russell Slade stepping out of the bushes at the edge of Hammond's property. Dolly back to show Hammond busily guiding the lawn mower, unaware of Slade's appearance. Slade moves toward Hammond slowly, gun drawn, his face grim, his eyes burning.

SLADE: Morning, Hammond . . .

HAMMOND: *(Turning suddenly)* Why . . . Slade! You . . . you startled me! Just a minute. I'll stop this thing . . . if I can . . .

SLADE: Don't bother, Hammond!

Cut to close up of gun in Slade's hand as it roars . . . spitting flame and smoke again and again . . .

SLADE: *(Shrieking over the sound of the gunfire)* I'm not staying!

Cut back to Hammond as he staggers, his face distorted in surprise and pain, then falls . . . three bullet holes in his chest. Slade stands over him, the smoking gun in his hand, grinning insanely.

SLADE: That takes care of you, heart-throb! Now to get back to my little starlet in town who'll do anything to get into pictures . . . even alibi for me.

Dolly back to show Slade as he turns and sprints across the lawn, looking back over his shoulder at the prostrate form of John Hammond. He does not see the neat little "Keep Off The Grass" sign in his path, and he stumbles awkwardly over it.

SLADE: *(In surprise)* What the . . . ?

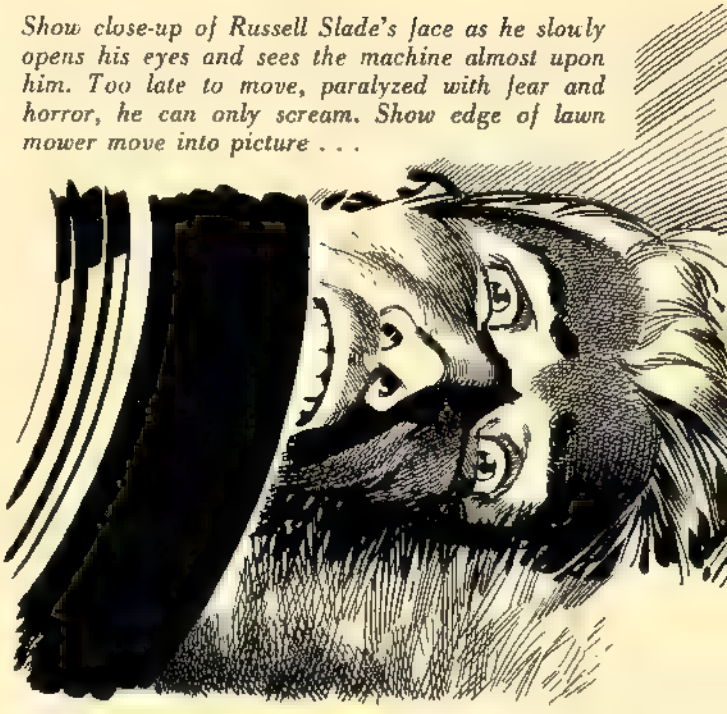
Move in for medium close-up of Slade as he pitches forward, striking his head soundly on the flagstone walk.

SLADE: Un-n-n-n-n-g-g-g!

Cut to power mower chugging crazily over lawn. Dolly back to show it moving toward the unconscious Russell Slade, its lethal blades spinning, catching the morning sunlight.

Cut to medium shot behind sputtering lawn mower bearing down on Slade, sending back a fine waterfall of green clippings . . . rolling nearer . . . and nearer . . . and nearer, to his head.

Show close-up of Russell Slade's face as he slowly opens his eyes and sees the machine almost upon him. Too late to move, paralyzed with fear and horror, he can only scream. Show edge of lawn mower move into picture . . .



. . . then . . . *CUT!*

THE END

PIECES OF HATE

Norman moved slowly through the upstairs hallway to the bedroom. When he reached the doorway, he stopped and stared grimly in at Bertha, his wife.

She was humming softly as she packed her clothes into the open suitcase on the bed. Norman shuddered.

The time had come. The weeks of planning and plotting were almost over now. Sally was in New York, waiting for him. She'd finished with her part of the scheme. Now it was up to Norman to complete his.

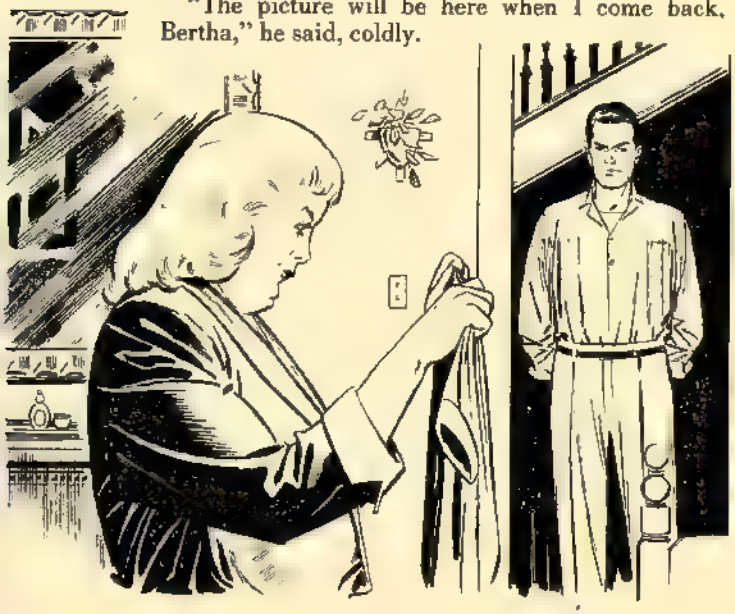
He gripped the handle of the axe he held behind his back a little tighter, and stepped into the bedroom.

"You know, dear," Bertha said, looking up at him, "I never did find that nice picture of me that used to be on the bureau!"

"Not that I want to take it with me on our trip, you understand," she said, turning again to her packing. "I'd just like it to be here when we get back."

Norman's eyes traveled over her, at the rolls of fat ballooning her tight-fitting housecoat.

"The picture will be here when I come back, Bertha," he said, coldly.



Bertha smiled, continuing on with her packing "You made a mistake, dear," she said sweetly. "You meant to say 'when *we* come back.' You said . . ."

"I said 'when *I* come back,' Bertha! I know! And it's no mistake! You see, *you're* not *coming* back! You're not even *going* to New York."

"Not even . . . going?" Bertha looked up at her husband, trying to understand. "What are you talking about?"

Norman stepped toward her. Bertha saw the angry fire in his eyes, and the grim expression around his tight-lipped mouth, and her blood ran cold as he brought the gleaming axe from behind his back.

"Norman!" Her voice was a choking rasp. "What . . . what are you . . . going to do . . . with that . . . axe?"

"I'm going to kill you with it," Norman said flatly. "Sally and I have it all planned . . ."

Bertha backed off, whimpering.

"S-Sally?" she stammered.

Norman moved forward, the axe hanging loosely at his side.

"Yes, my dear," he whispered. "Sally! Beautiful, exciting Sally! She's waiting for me now . . . in New York. She's going to take your place!"

"Take . . . my . . . place?"

Bertha shook her head, the tears filling her eyes. She cowered against the bedroom wall.

"I . . . I don't understand, Norman! H-how could this . . . this Sally take my place?" Her instinct told her to keep talking.

"It's very simple, Bertha!" Norman stood before her, grinning. "Where do you think that nice portrait of you disappeared to? *I* took it!"

"*You?*" Bertha gasped. "But . . . *why?*"

"To give to Sally," Norman snapped. "She took it to New York . . . to a Plastic Surgeon. And he operated on her! He made her look just like *you*, Bertha!"

Norman giggled idiotically, advancing toward the quivering mound of flesh before him.

"Only, of course, she's not a *fat slob* like you," he spat.

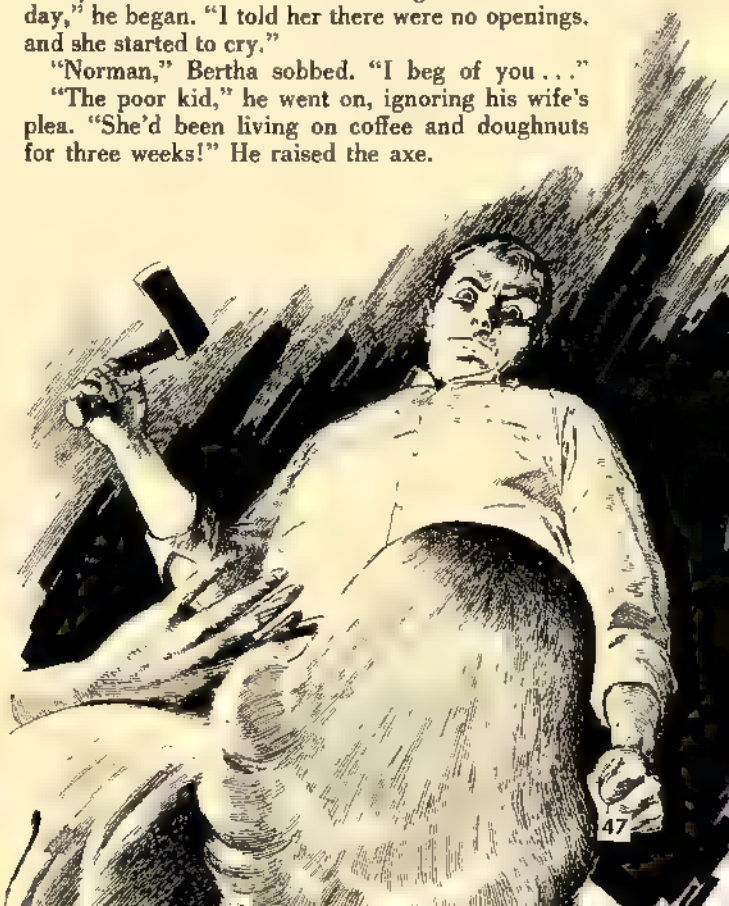
"When we come back from our vacation in New York, they'll all comment on how well I look, and how much weight you've lost, and no one will know the difference, because they'll think Sally is you!" Norman's face brightened. "Would you like to hear about how I met Sally . . . before I kill you?"

Bertha's legs melted and she sunk to the floor. "Don't, Norman! Please! Have pity," she cried.

Norman stood over Bertha, grinning down at her. "Sally came into the office looking for work one day," he began. "I told her there were no openings, and she started to cry."

"Norman," Bertha sobbed. "I beg of you . . ."

"The poor kid," he went on, ignoring his wife's plea. "She'd been living on coffee and doughnuts for three weeks!" He raised the axe.



"The road company of the show she'd been with was disbanded, leaving her stranded here with no money . . . no job."

"Norman! Please! P-please don't!"

High over his head, the axe hesitated, wavering.

"Her acting ability, Bertha! That's what's going to be so helpful when she takes your place! Do you know she studied your voice for weeks? I made recordings . . ."

"Norm . . . Oh, God!"

"We fell in love, Bertha," he went on, talking to deaf ears. "Just like that! When I'd heard she hadn't eaten a decent meal in weeks, I took her out to dinner!"

He knelt and raised the axe again, then looked at the blood dripping onto the scatter rug. He shook his head. He put down the axe and dragged her body into the bathroom.

Bertha shrieked. The axe flashed down. The singing of high-carbon steel and the soft wet thud of razor-sharp metal against flesh and bone cut the shriek short.

"Like I said, Bertha," Norman hissed. "Sally and I planned this carefully. Very carefully!"

He stood looking down at his wife lying on the bedroom floor with the blood oozing from the deep gash he'd opened up in her skull.

"Tile floors are much easier to clean than rugs, aren't they Bertha?" he said to the corpse.

He dropped the body on the bathroom floor and went back for the axe, knitting his brows.

"Now where was I? Oh, yes! Yes, that day in the restaurant where I took her, Sally and I fell in love." He picked up the axe. "It was just like one of those things you read about."

He returned to the bathroom and knelt down over the body.

"It was like we were both struck by lightning. Love at first sight! Hungry, passionate love! And all those nights when you thought I was out with the boys, or working late, or out walking, I was with Sally!"

He raised the axe.

The tile floor turned crimson as he brought the axe down savagely, again and again . . . hacking . . . severing . . . dismembering the body before him.

And while he worked, he talked, as though the bloody mess could hear and understand what he had to say.

"I knew you would never . . . uhh . . . give me . . . uhh . . . a divorce! I knew it. I . . . uhhh . . . told Sally it was . . . uhhhh . . . hopeless!"

He stood up and wiped the perspiration from his forehead, smearing his brow scarlet.

He stood there, surveying his work . . . satisfied.

"And then Sally and I thought of this plan . . . to get rid of you . . . so that Sally could take your place." He was breathless and his arms were tired. He went out of the bathroom and stumbled down the stairs, muttering to himself.

"My vacation was coming up. It would be so simple. Neighbors, relatives, everyone would think I'd taken you away . . . to New York!"

He went into the kitchen and opened a cabinet. He smiled in at the collection of brown paper bags Bertha saved from super-market trips.

"No one would ever suspect that I'd dismembered your body and wrapped each section carefully."

He brought the bags upstairs to the bathroom. ". . . and buried them in the backyard!"

In the darkness of the starless night, Norman carried out one blood-stained brown paper package at a time, and dug a shallow hole for it in the backyard, and buried it. He worked quietly, although there was no need. The neighbors had long since retired, and now slept soundly.

"So Sally studied your voice from secret recordings I made of your incessant chatter," he whispered to the latest parcel he was covering. "She learned to imitate you perfectly!"

One after the other, through the night, he carried out and buried the grisly bundles around the yard, patting back the sod smoothly. And as he worked, he whispered to the dark wind.

"She watched you from afar. She studied your walk, your mannerisms, your every movement."

Then, his packages of grue interred, he went back upstairs and carefully scrubbed the bathroom clean of the blood.

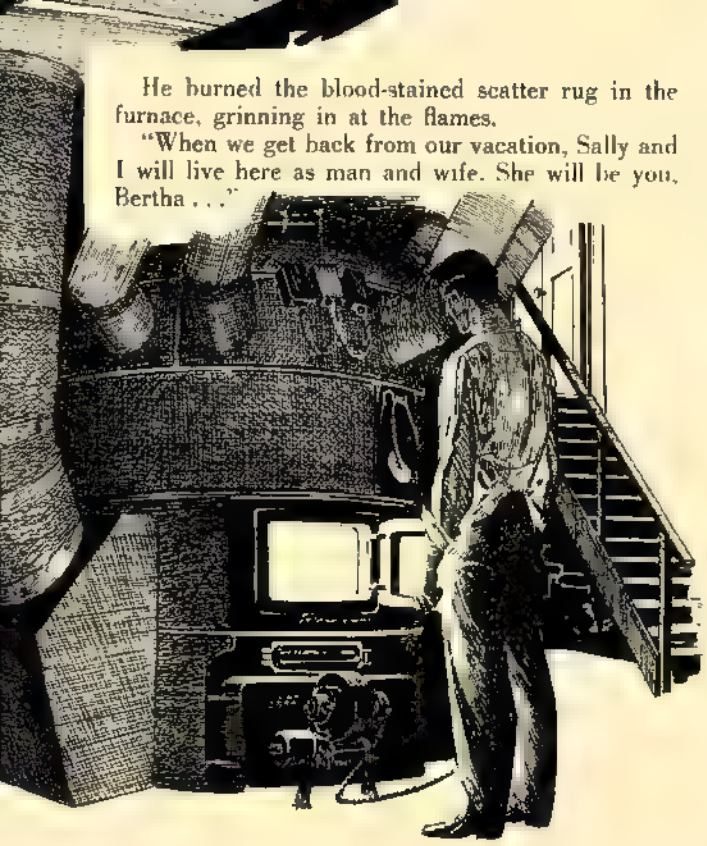
"Finally," he grinned down at the spotless tile floor, "last month, I took your portrait from its place on the bureau, and gave it to Sally, and she went to New York, to a Plastic Surgeon."

Next, he scrubbed the axe clean, picked up the scatter rug, and went down into the cellar. There, he returned the axe to its place in the toolbox.

"Last night, Sally called me. They'd removed the bandages. The operation was a success. We were all set to go!" he said to the murder weapon.

He burned the blood-stained scatter rug in the furnace, grinning in at the flames.

"When we get back from our vacation, Sally and I will live here as man and wife. She will be you, Bertha . . ."



Then, he went back upstairs, got Bertha's suitcase, carried it downstairs, and put it in the trunk of the car.

". . . and no one will ever suspect that the real you lies buried in neat little packages beneath our back yard!"

He got his coat and hat, and took a final tour through the house, checking to see that everything was in perfect order.

"We've said our goodbyes. Everyone knows we were to leave early this morning. I can always say we were so excited, we couldn't sleep, and so we left earlier than we'd planned."

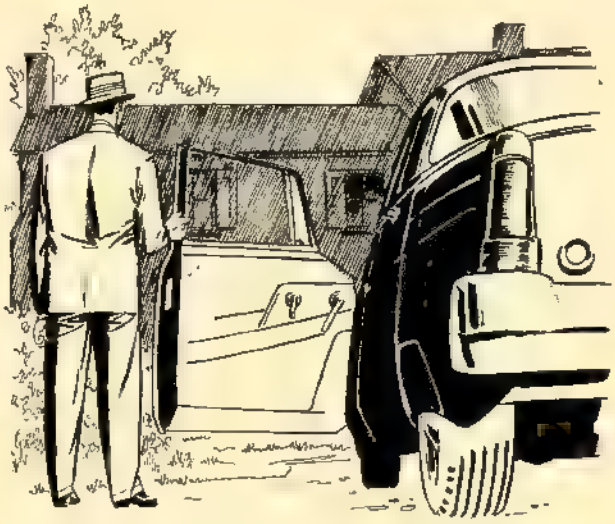
He turned out all the lights, locked the front door, and even remembered to place the note for the milkman that Bertha had written earlier in the empty bottle on the back steps.

"Next stop . . . New York," he smiled, "and my new wife . . . my new Bertha . . . Sally . . . with Bertha's old face . . . but with her own slim, beautiful, desirable body . . ."

Norman opened the garage doors and got into the car, sliding onto the seat beside the department-store mannequin he'd bought two weeks before. He'd hidden it in the trunk of his car, and that evening, before he'd gone upstairs to murder Bertha, he'd dressed the mannequin in Bertha's clothes and hat. He grinned at it. He'd thought of everything. Even the possibility that some nosey neighbor might be up that time of morning and see him drive off. Now they'd see that Bertha was with him.

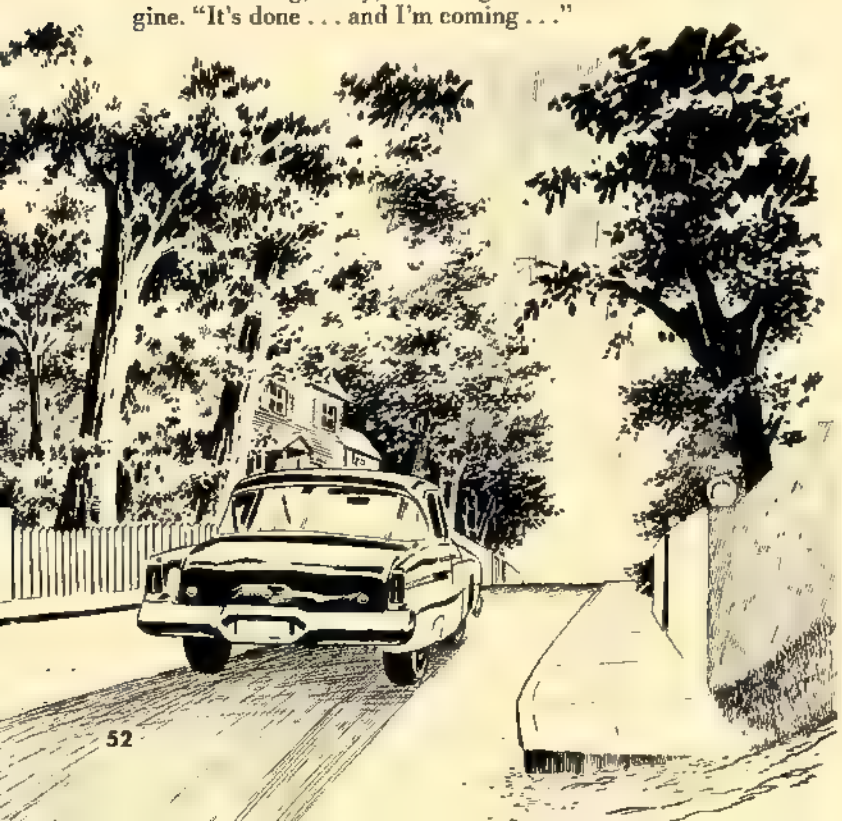
He started the car, and backed it out of the garage slowly. He stopped it on the driveway, got out, and closed the garage doors, locking them carefully. He stood for a moment in the morning greyness, surveying the empty, dark house. The house that had held so much misery for him for so many long years. The house that now held a grisly secret clasped in its damp backyard soil-bosom.

"Goodby, Bertha," he whispered. "Forever . . ."



He got back into the car, backed out into the street, and roared off into the coming dawn.

"I'm coming, Sally," he sang to the metal hum of the engine. "It's done . . . and I'm coming . . ."



Somewhere between Little Falls, Ohio, where Norman lived, and New York City, from a deserted river-bridge, he dropped the mannequin, weighted with skid-chains, into the still water below.

Norman was to meet Sally at a predetermined spot in the city's suburbs. She was waiting on the corner when he pulled up. For a moment, when he saw her, his heart stopped. It was uncanny.

"Norman, dearest," she whispered hotly, getting in. "I missed you so."

"Good Lord, Sally," he stammered. "Y-you look just like her!"

"Yes," she smiled wryly. "He did an excellent job, don't you think?"

They drove into the city, Sally snuggling close to him. As the initial shock of seeing her wore off, Norman smiled. "We'll be able to carry this off with no trouble at all, Sally! You're perfect!"

"Was it . . . terrible, Norman?" She clutched his arm. "I mean . . . killing her like that?"

"It was all right," he said, staring at the blood-red tail lights of the car ahead. "I kept thinking of you and that gave me the strength!"

The traffic grew heavier. They roared through a tunnel. And then they were there. Manhattan. Towering monsters of steel and concrete. Millions of people, rushing nowhere. Norman breathed easier.

They put the car in a garage, and taxied to the hotel near Times Square.

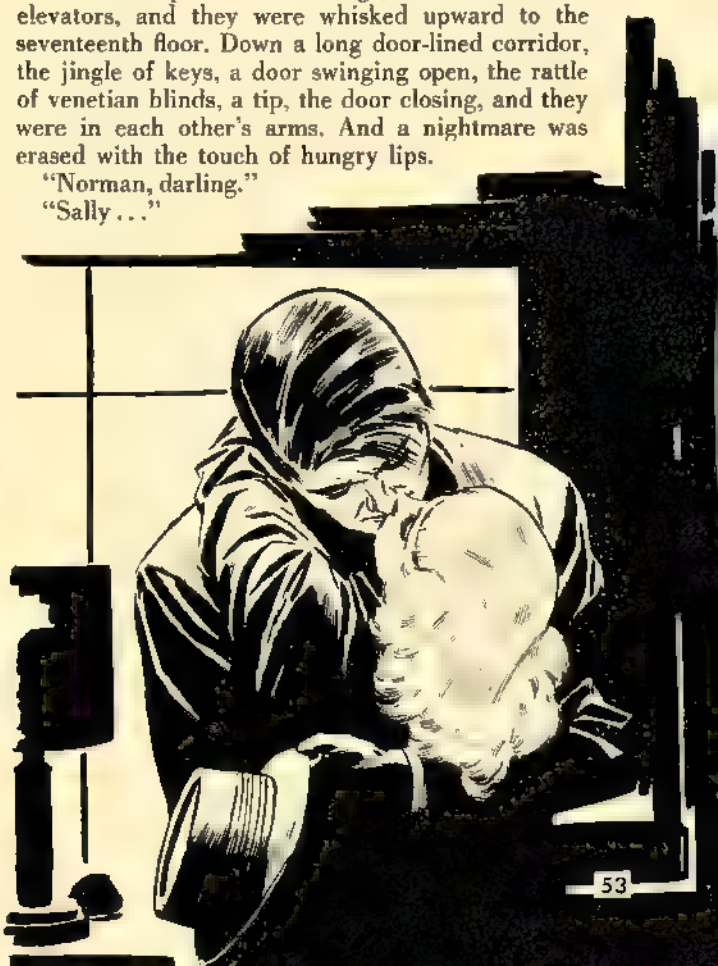
"You have a reservation for Mr and Mrs Norman Cracken," he told the clerk at the desk.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Cracken. Room 1780. Sign here."

The bellhop took their bags, led them to the elevators, and they were whisked upward to the seventeenth floor. Down a long door-lined corridor, the jingle of keys, a door swinging open, the rattle of venetian blinds, a tip, the door closing, and they were in each other's arms. And a nightmare was erased with the touch of hungry lips.

"Norman, darling."

"Sally . . ."



New York. To Norman, it was a fairyland. A far cry from the dull, drab, small town of Little Falls. He drank it in. He took Sally to the best restaurants and they dined lavishly. There were Broadway plays and smoke-filled night clubs. And in the daytime, there were the sights. The Statue of Liberty. Wall Street. Chinatown. The Empire State Building. They clung together one hundred and two stories over the teeming streets and Norman felt the blast of free air in his face.

On the third day, they visited Rockefeller Center . . . Radio and T.V. City . . . where many of the programs that Norman had watched and listened to through long boring nights with Bertha originated from.

The sign at the "Guest Relations" desk caught Sally's eye. "Look, Norman," she said. "Free tickets! We can see a broadcast . . ."

She beamed like a child, tugging at his arm.

The girl behind the "Guest Relations" desk looked up as Sally and Norman approached.

"What can I do for you?" she smiled.

"We're from out of town," said Norman.

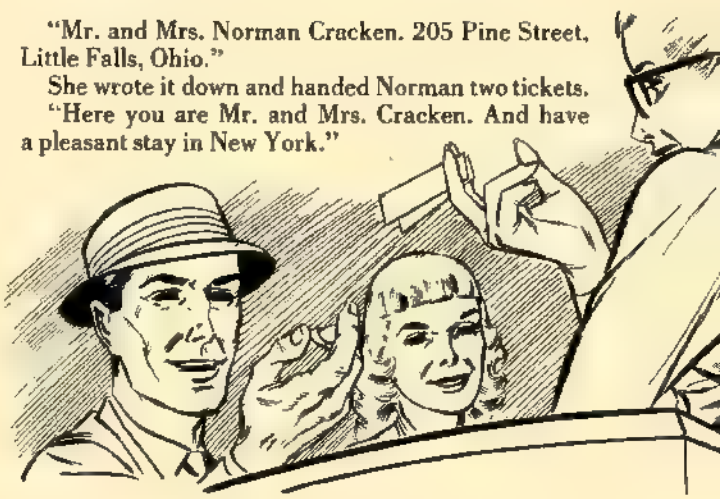
"We'd like to see a Radio or T.V. show, if we could," said Sally eagerly.

"Of course!" The girl picked up a pencil. "Your name and address, please?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Norman Cracken. 205 Pine Street, Little Falls, Ohio."

She wrote it down and handed Norman two tickets.

"Here you are Mr. and Mrs. Cracken. And have a pleasant stay in New York."



"What show are they for?" asked Sally as they left the "Guest" desk.

Norman studied the tickets. "Some new quiz show. It's the premier. It's called . . ." Norman laughed. "Treasure Hunt."

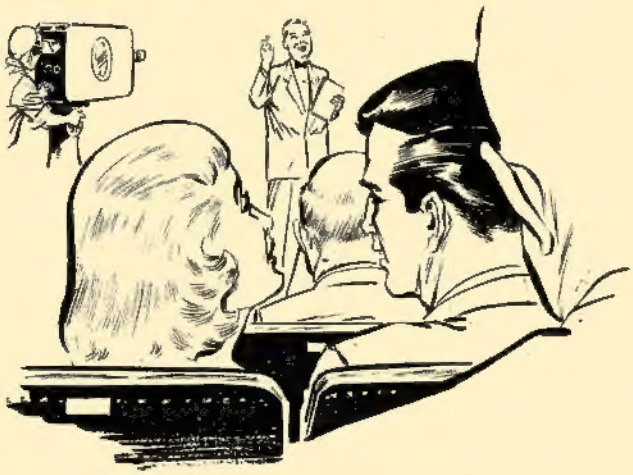
"Oh, good," Sally giggled. "Maybe we'll get on it and win some money."

"Ahh, forget about that," said Norman. "Don't you know only friends of the sponsors and producers get on those things."

That night, fifteen minutes before air time, Norman and Sally arrived at the studio designated on their tickets and took their seats. Almost at the same moment, the pre-broadcast warm-up began.

"Good evening, folks," said a grinning enthusiastic man on the stage. "I'm Bert Collie, your Emcee on 'Treasure Hunt'! We've got a few minutes before we go on, so let's pick out our contestants." He shuffled through some cards in his hand. "Will Mr. and Mrs. Norman Cracker . . . or Cracken . . . come up?"

"Norman!" Sally gasped. "That's us!"



As they made their way to the stage, the Emcee called out other names. When all the contestants had been picked, the Emcee explained.

"Our 'Guest Relations Bureau' supplied us with these names, folks. They're all people from out of town!" He turned to the contestants. "Now the idea of 'Treasure Hunt' is very simple! I ask questions! If you answer four of them correctly, you become eligible for the 'Treasure Hunt' question! Get that one and you go on the Treasure Hunt! Okay? Good! We're on the air in one minute!"

There was a breathless rush about everything, like water racing in circles around the vortex of a whirlpool. Suddenly the program was on the air. Suddenly the first contestants were standing at the microphone. Suddenly, Mr. Collie was laughing.

"Oh, I'm sorry, folks! That's the wrong answer! But for appearing on Treasure Hunt, we present you with a year's supply of . . ."

And suddenly, an assistant director was whispering to them. "Step up, Mr. and Mrs. Cracken. You're next!"

They stood there under the bright lights, before the T.V. cameras moving in and out. Norman and Sally. Answering questions as if in a dream. One: Correct! Two: Correct! Three: Correct! Four . . .

"Correct," shrieked the exuberant Emcee. "You have answered four questions correctly and that makes you eligible for the 'Treasure Hunt' Question! Now listen carefully. We will allow one answer, and one answer only!"

The Emcee held up his hand, signalling no help from the audience. The studio fell silent.

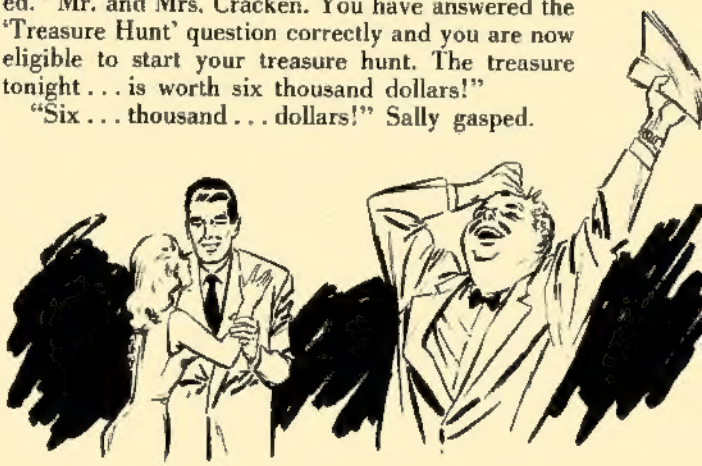
"What were the names of Columbus's three ships?" Mr. Collie asked. He repeated the question.

"The . . . Santa Maria! And . . ." Norman hesitated.

"The Nina and the Pinta!" squealed Sally.

"Correct! Absolutely correct!" The Emcee screamed. "Mr. and Mrs. Cracken. You have answered the 'Treasure Hunt' question correctly and you are now eligible to start your treasure hunt. The treasure tonight . . . is worth six thousand dollars!"

"Six . . . thousand . . . dollars!" Sally gasped.



"That's right!" laughed Mr. Collie. "Six thousand dollars! And do you know *where* that treasure is, Mr. and Mrs. Cracken? Well, all you have to do is go back to . . . let's see . . . Little Falls, Ohio, and *dig it up!*"

Norman felt his blood suddenly run cold.

"Because," Mr. Collie was giggling, "right at this moment, a field team from this program is burying your treasure . . . the treasure you have won . . . six thousand dollars . . . in your *own back yard!*

Sally's face turned ashen white except for the bruises remaining from her recent operation. Norman felt suddenly sick.

"S'matter, folks?" Mr. Collie chided. "Aren't you happy? Right at this moment, they're digging up your yard and burying little boxes of money. Six. Each with one thousand dollars."

Norman and Sally looked at each other. They looked at Mr. Collie. They looked around the studio.

There was no place to run. No place to hide. No place to escape from the inevitable.

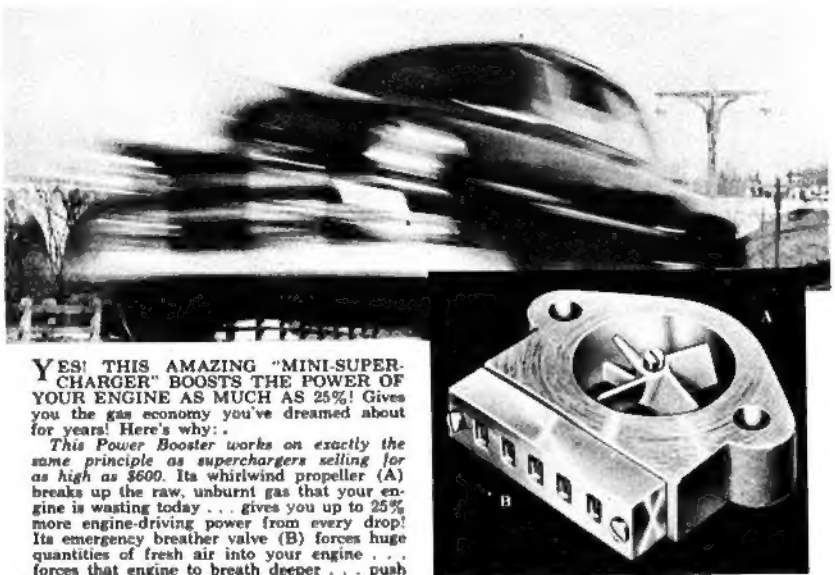
And then, somewhere backstage, a telephone began to ring.

THE END

Now! Turn Your Waste Gas Into SUPER POWER!

IT'S TRUE! Now you can get the breath-taking acceleration . . . jack-rabbit starts . . . blazing new power that you've dreamed about for years—*simply by harnessing the raw, unburnt gasoline that your engine is wasting today!*

You can get performance from your present car that will make your friends gasp with astonishment—*and you can save $25, $50, even $75 a year on gas bills alone doing it!*



YES! THIS AMAZING "MINI-SUPER-CHARGER" BOOSTS THE POWER OF YOUR ENGINE AS MUCH AS 25%! Gives you the gas economy you've dreamed about for years! Here's why: .

This Power Booster works on exactly the same principle as superchargers selling for as high as $600. Its whirlwind propeller (A) breaks up the raw, unburnt gas that your engine is wasting today . . . gives you up to 25% more engine-driving power from every drop! Its emergency breather valve (B) forces huge quantities of fresh air into your engine . . . forces that engine to breath deeper . . . push harder . . . pile up more mileage from every gallon you buy! It gives you A TREMENDOUS NEW BURST OF MONEY-SAVING POWER, just when you need it most—when you flash away from traffic . . . shoot up steep hills . . . pick up speed on the open highway!

No wonder dozens of leading car magazines call this the "money-saving discovery of the year." *Test this amazing gas-saver yourself—without risking a penny! THE THRILLING FACTS ARE ON THIS PAGE!*

Yes! *You, yourself* can fit this amazing GASOLINE ATOMIZER on to your car in as little as 20 easy minutes! *And it is guaranteed to pay you back your full purchase price, in gas savings alone, in the first 3 to 4 short months that you use it. Here's why!*

By RICHARD JOHNS

Mr. Car Owner! How would you like to have the driving thrill of your life next weekend?

Picture this yourself! Next weekend you go down to your car—the same tired car that you've been driving for years. You've made only one simple change to that car, so easy that your 16-year-old son could do it! But now, when you turn on the ignition, *a modern miracle of engineering science comes to life under your hood!*

From the very first moment, you'll see and feel the difference in that engine. That engine will hum with new, throbbing power. When you release the emergency brake, your car will glide out of its parking space . . . roll down the street with your foot hardly touching the pedal. Every 30 or 40 seconds, you'll give that car an extra shot of gas . . . feeling it spurt ahead . . . testing the new power that's singing underneath your foot!

We ask you to pull up to another car at the stop light, of approximately the same year and make as your own! Wait until the light changes from red to green. Let the other car start first. Wait till the other car gets half way across the street. *And then slam your foot down on the gas pedal!*

Before that other car has even crossed the street, you will have caught up with him. For one brief second, you and that other car will race fender to fender. And then you will flash away from him . . . you will leave him a full block behind . . . you will look in your rear view mirror and see the startled look of amazement in the other driver's eyes!

TEST THIS NEW POWER A HUNDRED DIFFERENT WAYS!

But this is just the beginning! Test this equipment for one full month—entirely at our risk! Test it on the highway! Use it to flash away from other cars . . . spurt up the *steepest hills . . . actually pass other cars in 2, 4, 6 and even 8 seconds LESS than you could have done formerly!*

Test this equipment in long-range driving! See the *enormous gas savings it gives you* at high speeds! Prove to yourself that at 50 . . . 60 . . . even 70 miles an hour, *your foot is still half-way up on the pedal*—you still have all the reserve power you need to get out of any emergency on the highway!

Yes, and test this equipment in stop-and-go city driving! Prove to yourself that it gives you the instant acceleration you need to get out in front of the crowd . . . *with far less gas* than you're using today! Prove to yourself that it can actually save you $25 to $50 to $75 on your gas bills every single year . . . *that it actually pays back its full cost, in gas savings alone, during the first three or four months—or your full money back!*

HOW DOES THIS PRODUCT GIVE YOU SUCH TREMENDOUS NEW POWER?

And you get all this performance—and more—from a small, polished machine of bronze and aluminum that you can hold in your hand! Here's why:

Gasoline in its liquid form is not explosive. If you accidentally drop a lighted match into a bucket full of gasoline, the chances are 10 to 1 that that gasoline will actually *put out* that match. *But simply mix that same bucket full of gas with the proper amount of air, and you will have enough explosive power to drive a ten ton truck!*

The main purpose of this machine is to SUPER-MIX . . . SUPER-VAPORIZE . . . SUPER-ATOMIZE your gas in exactly that way! To squeeze the *hidden power* out of that gas! To mix that gas with much greater volumes of air! To make that gas *more explosive* in the engine of your car!

No wonder men have paid up to $600 for Superchargers! What we are offering you on this page is a MINI-SUPERCHARGER — easier to install — less expensive! But still the only power product you can buy with all these tremendous advantages:

1. You can install it yourself, in just 30 minutes, even if you never picked up a tool before in your life! No $10, $15 or $20 mechanic's bills! No drilling, or grinding of any kind! You never even touch the inside of your engine!

2. It never needs further adjustments, for the full lifetime of your car! Nothing to go out of order or break down on the highway. Completely guaranteed for 20 years.

3. It takes up no room in your car . . . makes no "souped-up" noise! No shifting around of engine parts. No "hot rod" noises to cause embarrassment!

SO EASY TO INSTALL THAT EVEN YOUR 16-YEAR-OLD SON CAN DO IT!

HERE'S ALL YOU DO!

Step 1. Open your hood. Locate Air Cleaner and Carburetor Unit that sits smack on top of your engine. *Simply take an ordinary* wrench and loosen the two or three bolts that hold carburetor to the engine!

Step 2. Lift up the carburetor. Put MINI-SUPERCHARGER unit in place. *What could be easier?*

Step 3. Replace carburetor. *Now turn on your engine! And then get in and take the most thrilling drive of your life!*

TRY IT ENTIRELY AT OUR RISK

This MINI-SUPER-CHARGER (U.S. Patent No. 2,409,937) sells for only $9.95 for most six-cylinder cars and only $11.95 for most eight-cylinder cars. This is *your total cost —there is no installation fee!* And, most important of all, *we guarantee that you will save this full purchase in gas bills alone —in the first 3 to 4 months that you own this device.*

You have nothing to lose! Try this equipment entirely at our risk. It must give you a whole new world of driving pleasure and economy or your full money back! Act today!

EUGENE STEVENS, INC.
400 MADISON AVE., N.Y.C., 17, N.Y.

WE GUARANTEE YOUR GAS SAVINGS!

Clip this guarantee section out of this page. It authorizes you to try this amazing new MINI-SUPERCHARGER for a full four months ENTIRELY AT OUR RISK! At the end of that time, this device must save you—on gas alone —EVERY SINGLE CENT OF THE MONEY THAT YOU PAID FOR IT—OR YOUR FULL MONEY WILL BE REFUNDED! This offer is good for a full four months! It is probably the most amazing offer in car history! You have nothing to lose! ACT TODAY!

Eugene Stevens, Inc.

Eugene Stevens, Pres.

MINI-SUPERCHARGER PRICE LIST

Buick	All Models	$11.95
Cadillac	All Models	11.95
Chevrolet	All Models	9.95
Chrysler	Six's and Eight's up to 1949	9.95
Chrysler	All Eight's after '49	11.95
DeSoto	All Six's	9.95
DeSoto	All Eight's	11.95
Dodge	All Six's to 1953	9.95
Dodge	All Six's after 1953 and all Eight's	11.95
Ford	All Six's to 1953	9.95
Ford	All Six's after 1953 and all Eight's	11.95
Hudson	Pacemk'r '50-'51-'52	9.95
Hudson	Hornet '51-'52-'53	9.95
Hudson	All other Models	11.95
Kaiser & Fraser	All Models thru '48	9.95
Kaiser & Fraser	All other Models	11.95
Lincoln	All Models	11.95
Nash	Six's '39 thru '51	9.95
Nash	Six's after 1951 and all Eight's	11.95
Oldsmobile	Six's '39 thru '51	9.95
Oldsmobile	All Six's after 1951 and all Eight's	11.95
Mercury	All Models	11.95
Packard	All Models	11.95
Plymouth	All Models	9.95
Pontiac	Six's '39 thru '52	9.95
Pontiac	All Six's after 1953 and all Eight's	11.95
Studebaker	Eight's '51 thru '55	11.95
Studebaker	All Six's and all Eight's to 1951	9.95
Willys	All Models	9.95

FREE!

UP TO $3 RETAIL VALUE! UP TO 2 TO 4 MILES MORE PER GALLON INSTANTLY, SAY THOUSANDS OF USERS.

THIS is probably the most widely sold piece of automotive equipment in the world! OVER HALF A MILLION DRIVERS have paid up to $3 a set to put these amazing Air Bleed Needles on their cars! *But we bought out an entire factory at a sacrifice price! For this one advertisement only, we can offer you these exact same needles as a FREE gift, even if you return the MINI-SUPERCHARGER!*

1. They fit onto the carburetor of your car, where they replace the standard Idling Adjustment Screw. If you have a six-cylinder car, then you will need only one of the Air Bleed Needles (regular retail price $1.50). If you have an eight-cylinder car, then you will need two needles (regular retail price — $3.00). In either case, you simply unscrew the old needle and put in the new. THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT! Even if you never looked under your hood before, you can do it in 60 seconds . . . without touching a tool, without even getting your hands dirty!

2. The purpose of these Air Bleed Needles is to STOP YOUR CAR FROM WASTING GAS IN STOP-AND-GO DRIVING . . . and to save you up to 2 to 4 miles a gallon. If you use your car to go shopping . . . if you have to fight traffic as much as once a week, then we believe you'll bless the day you first put this equipment in your car! And of course, at the same time it can give you easier, quicker performance and pick-up and smoother, more economical idling!

REMEMBER, THIS IS PROBABLY YOUR ONLY CHANCE TO GET THESE AMAZING AIR BLEED NEEDLES AS A FREE GIFT—a gift that is worth so much as $3 to you—and a gift that is yours to keep even if you return the MINI-SUPERCHARGER!

But you must act today! Our supply is limited! We can make this offer only this one time in this magazine! Simply send us the make and year of your car, and this gift is yours! *BUT ACT TODAY!*

---MAIL NO-RISK COUPON TODAY!---

EUGENE STEVENS, INC. **EC**

400 MADISON AVE., N.Y.C., N.Y.

Yes, I want to try your amazing MINI-SUPERCHARGER *entirely at your risk!* Please send me the precision-made model that fits my car. I will pay postman only.....(see price list for all models at left), plus low COD charges. I understand that this item is completely guaranteed. It must give me tremendous new pick-up, acceleration and power . . . it must save me enough money, in gas alone, to pay back every cent of its cost in the first 3 to 4 months that I own it—or my full money back!

Also send me as your Extra Gift Premium, the Free Air Bleed Needle Set, mine as a gift! If not completely satisfied, I will return the MINI-SUPERCHARGER, but keep the needles!

MAKE OF CAR ..... please print

YEAR ..... NUMBER OF CYLINDERS .....

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... ZONE ..... STATE .....

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